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POLICE COM S OF NEW YORK CITY

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TOM SLADE

BOY SCOUT OF THE MOVING PICTURES

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"I SWIPED TWO O' THIM QUARANTINE SIGNS OFFEN TWO DOORS."

Frontispiece (Page 20)

TOM SLADE

BOY SCOUT OF THE MOVING PICTURES

BY

PERCY K. FITZHUGH

ADAPTED AND ILLUSTRATED FROM
THE PHOTO PLAY
"THE ADVENTURES OF A BOY SCOUT"

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TOM SLADE

BOY SCOUT OF THE MOVING PICTURES

CHAPTER I

STICKS AND STONES

It happened in Barrel Alley, and it was Tom Slade, as usual, who did it. Picking a barrel-stave out of the mud, he sidled up to Ching Wo's laundry, opened the door, beat the counter with a resounding clamor, called, "Ching, Ching, Chinaman!" and by way of a grand climax, hurled the dirty barrel-stave at a pile of spotless starched shirts, banged the door shut and ran.

Tom was "on the hook" this morning. In one particular (and in only one) Tom was like "Old John Temple," who owned the bank as well as Barrel Alley. Both took one day off a week. "Old John" never went down to the bank on Saturdays and Tom never went to school on Mondays. He began his school week on Tuesday;

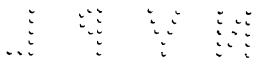
and the truant officer was just about as sure to cast his dreaded net in Barrel Alley on a Monday as old John Temple was sure to visit it on the first of the month—when the rents were due.

This first and imminent rock of peril passed, Tom lost no time in offering the opening number of his customary morning program, which was to play some prank on Ching Wo. But Ching Wo, often disturbed, like a true philosopher, and knowing it was Monday, picked out the soiled shirts, piled up the others, threw the muddy stave out and quietly resumed his ironing.

Up at the corner Tom emerged around John Temple's big granite bank building into the brighter spectacle of Main Street. Here he paused to adjust the single strand of suspender which he wore. The other half of this suspender belonged to his father; the two strands had originally formed a single pair and now, in their separate responsibilities, each did duty continuously, since neither Tom nor his father undressed when they went to bed.

His single strand of suspender replaced, Tom shuffled along down Main Street on his path of glory.

At the next corner was a coal-box. This he



opened and helped himself to several chunks of coal. A little farther on he came to a trolley car standing still. Sidling up behind it, he grabbed the pole-rope, detaching the pulley from the wire.

The conductor emerged, shook his fist at the retreating boy and sent a few expletives after him. Tom then let fly one piece of coal after another at the rear platform of the car, keeping a single chunk for future use.

For, whenever Tom Slade got into a dispute (which was on an average of a dozen times a day), he invariably picked up a stone. Not that he expected always to throw it, though he often did, but because it illustrated his attitude of suspicion and menace toward the world in general, and toward other boys in particular.

So firmly rooted had the habit become that even indoors when his father threatened him (which was likewise on an average of a dozen times a day) he would reach cautiously down behind his legs, as if he expected to find a stone on the kitchen floor conveniently near at hand.

First and last, Tom had heard a good deal of unfavorable comment about his fancy for throwing stones. Mrs. Bennett, the settlement worker,

had informed him that throwing stones was despicable, which went in one ear and out the other, because Tom did not know what "despicable" meant. The priest had told him that it was both wicked and cowardly; while the police had gone straight to the heart of the matter by threatening to lock him up for it.

And yet, you know, it was not until Tom met young Mr. Ellsworth, scoutmaster, that he heard something on the subject which stuck in his mind. On this day of Tom's wild exploits, as he moved along a little further down the street he came to the fence which enclosed John Temple's vacant lot. It was covered with gaudy posters and with his remaining piece of coal he proceeded to embellish these.

He was so absorbed in his decorative enterprise that he did not notice the person who was standing quietly on the sidewalk watching him, until he was aware of a voice speaking very sociably.

"I don't think I should do that, my boy, if I were you."

Tom paused (in the middle of a most unwholesome sentence) and saw a young gentleman, perhaps twenty-seven or twenty-eight years old, looking pleasantly at him. He was extremely well-

dressed in a natty blue serge suit, and to Tom his appearance was little less than gorgeous.

The boy's first impulse was, of course, to run, and he made a start as if to do so. Then, fearing perhaps that there was not a clear get-away, he stooped for a stone.

"What are you going to do with that?" asked the young gentleman, smiling.

"Nartin."

"You weren't going to throw it at me, I hope, while I am standing three feet from you."

Tom was a little nonplussed. "I wouldn't t'row no stone standin' near yer," he grumbled.

"Good," said the young man; "you have some ideas about sporting, haven't you? Though, of course, you're no sport—or you wouldn't have picked up a stone at all."

Now this was great news to Tom. He knew he was no gentleman; Mrs. Bennett had told him that. He knew he was a hoodlum; the trolley conductors had told him that. He knew that he was lazy and shiftless and unkempt and a number of other things, for the world at large had made no bones of telling him so; but never, never for one moment had he supposed that he was no sport. He had always believed that to hit

a person with a stone and "get away with it" represented the very top-notch of fun and sporting proficiency.

So he looked at this young man as if he thought that he had inadvertently turned the world upside down.

"Give me that piece of coal, my boy, and let's see if we can't mark out that last word."

"Yer'll git yer hand all dirty wid coal," said Tom, hardly knowing what else to say.

"Well, a dirty hand isn't as bad as a filthy word; besides, I'm rooting in the dirt with my hands all summer, anyway," said the young man, as he marked out Tom's handiwork. "There," he added, handing back the coal, "that's not so bad now; guess neither one of us is much of an artist, hey? See that scratch?" he went on, exhibiting his hand to Tom. "I got that shinning up a tree. Come on, let's beat it; first thing you know a cop will be here."

Tom hardly knew what to think of this strange, sumptuously-attired creature whose hands were rooting in the dirt all summer, and who got a scratch (which he proudly exhibited) from shinning up a tree; who said "beat it" when he meant "go away," and who called a policeman a "cop."

Tom rather liked the way this strange man talked, though it was not without a tinge of suspicion that he accompanied him along the street, casting furtive glances at his luxurious attire, wondering how such as he could climb a tree.

"*You* couldn't shin up no tree," he presently ventured.

"Oh, couldn't I, though?" laughed his companion. "I've shinned up more trees than you've got fingers and toes."

"When you was a kid?"

"I'm a kid now, and don't you forget it. And I'll give you a tip, too. Grind up some bark in your hands—it works fine."

They walked on silently for a little way; an ill-assorted pair they must have seemed to a passer-by, the boy hitching up his suspender as often as it slid from his shoulder in his shuffling effort to keep up with the alert stride of his companion.

"Trouble with stone-throwing is that there isn't any skill in it. You know what Buck Edwards said, don't you? He said he'd have learned to pitch much easier if it hadn't been for throwing stones when he was a kid. He used to be a regular fiend at it, and when he came to passing curves

he couldn't make his first finger behave. You think Buck can beat that pitcher the Prep. boys have got?"

"Dem High School guys is all right."

"Well, Buck's a good pitcher. I don't suppose I've thrown a stone in ten years. But I bet I could practice for ten minutes and beat you out. You smoke, don't you?"

"N-no—yeer, I do sometimes."

"Just caught the truth by the tail that time, didn't you?" the young man laughed. "Well, a kid can't aim steady if he smokes: that's one sure thing."

Tom was seized with a strange desire to strengthen his companion's side of the case. The poor boy had few enough arguments, goodness knows, in defense of his own habits, and his information was meagre enough. Yet the one little thing which he seemed to remember about the other side of stone-throwing he now contributed willingly.

"It's bad too if you ever land a guy one in the temple."

"Well, I don't know; I don't think there's so much in that, though there may be. I landed a guy one in the temple with a stick last summer—

accident, of course, and I thought it would kill him, but it didn't."

Tom was surprised and fascinated by the stranger's frankness.

"But a fellow that throws stones is no sport, that's sure, and you can mark that up in your brain if you happen to have a lump of coal handy."

"I chucked that coal—honest."

"Good."

It had been Tom's intention to go down through Chester Street and steal an apple from Schmitt's Grocery, but instead he accompanied his new friend until that mysterious person turned to enter a house.

"Guess we didn't swap names, did we?" the stranger said, holding out his hand.

It was the first time that Tom Slade had grasped anyone's hand in many a day.

"Tom—Tom Slade," he said, hitching up his suspender.

"So? Mine's Ellsworth. Come up to the Library building and see us some Friday night—the boys, I mean."

"Oh, are you the boss o' them regiment fellers?"

"Not exactly the boss; scouts we call ourselves."

"What's a scout? A soldier, like?"

"No, a scout's a fellow that does stunts and things."

"I betcher *you* kin do a few."

"I bet I can!" laughed Mr. Ellsworth; "you said it! I've got some of those boys guessing." Which was the plain truth.

"Drop in some Friday night and see us; don't forget now."

Tom watched him as he ascended the steps of a neighboring porch. He had a strange fascination for the boy, and it was not till the door closed behind him that Tom's steady gaze was averted. Then he shuffled off down the street.

CHAPTER II

"HATS OFF"

TOM SLADE awoke at about eleven o'clock, swung his legs to the floor, yawned, rubbed his eyes, felt blindly for his tattered shoes and sniffed the air.

Something was wrong, that was sure. Tom sniffed again. Something had undoubtedly happened. The old familiar odor which had dwelt in the Slade apartment all winter, the stuffy smell of bed clothes and dirty matting, of kerosene and smoke and fried potatoes and salt-fish and empty beer bottles, had given place to something new. Tom sniffed again.

Then, all of a sudden, his waking senses became aware of his father seated in his usual greasy chair, sideways to the window.

And the window was open!

The stove-lifter which had been used to pry it up lay on the sill, and the spring air, gracious and democratic, was pouring in amid the squalor

just as it was pouring in through the wide-swung cathedral windows of John Temple's home up in Grantley Square.

"Yer opened the winder, didn' yer?" said Tom.

"Never you mind what I done," replied his father.

"Ain't it after six?"

"Never you mind what 'tis; git yer cap 'n' beat it up to Barney's for a pint."

"Ain't we goin' to have no eats?"

"No, we ain't goin' ter have no eats. You tell Barney to give ye a cup o' coffee; tell 'im I said so."

"Awh, he wouldn' give me no pint widout de money."

"He wouldn', wouldn' he? I'll *pint* you!"

"I ain't goin' ter graft on him no more."

"Git me a dime off Tony then and stop in Billy's comin' back 'n' tell him I got the cramps agin and can't work."

"He'll gimme the laugh."

"I'll give ye the other kind of a laugh if ye don't beat it. I left you sleep till eleven o'clock——"

"You didn' leave me sleep," said Tom. "Yer only woke up yerself half an hour ago."

"Yer call me a liar, will ye?" roared Bill Slade, rising.

Tom took his usual strategic position on the opposite side of the table, and as his father moved ominously around it, kept the full width of it between them. When he reached a point nearest the sink he grabbed a dented pail therefrom and darted out and down the stairs.

Up near Grantley Square was a fence which bore the sign, "Post No Bills." How this had managed to escape Tom hitherto was a mystery, but he now altered it, according to the classic hoodlum formula, so that it read, "Rost No Pills," and headed up through the square for Barney Galloway's saloon. Bill Slade had been reduced to long-distance intercourse in the matter of saloons for he had exhausted his credit in all the places near Barrel Alley.

In the spacious garden of John Temple's home a girl of twelve or thirteen years was bouncing a ball. This was Mary Temple, and what business "old" John Temple had with such a pretty and graceful little daughter, I am not qualified to explain.

"Chuck it out here," said Tom, "an' I'll ketch it in the can."

She retreated a few yards into the garden, then turned, and gave Tom a withering stare.

"Chuck it out here and I'll chuck it back—honest," called Tom.

The girl's dignity began to show signs of collapse. She wanted to have that ball thrown, and to catch it.

"Will you promise to toss it back?" she weakened.

"Sure."

"Word and honor?"

"Sure."

"Cross your heart?"

"Sure."

Still she hesitated, arm in air.

"Will you promise to throw it back?"

"Sure, hope to die. Chuck it."

"Get back a little," said she.

The ball went sailing over the paling, Tom caught it, gave a yell of triumph, beat a tattoo upon the can, and ran for all he was worth.

Outside the saloon Tom borrowed ten cents from Tony, the bootblack, on his father's behalf, and with this he purchased the beer.

Meanwhile, the bad turn which he had done had begun to sprout and by the time he reached home

it had grown and spread to such proportions that Jack's beanstalk was a mere shrub compared with it. Nothing was farther from John Temple's thoughts that beautiful Saturday than to pay a visit to Barrel Alley. On the contrary, he was just putting on his new spring hat to go out to the Country Club for a turn at golf, when Mary came in crying that Tom Slade had stolen her ball.

Temple cared nothing about the ball, nor a great deal about Mary's tears, but the mention of Tom Slade reminded him that the first of the month was close at hand and that he had intended to "warn" Bill Slade with the usual threat of eviction. Bill had never paid the rent in full after the second month of his residence in Barrel Alley. When he was working and Temple happened to come along at a propitious moment, Bill would give him two dollars or five dollars, as the case might be, but as to how the account actually stood he had not the slightest idea.

If Tom had not sent Mary Temple into the house crying her father would never have thought to go through Barrel Alley on his way out to the Country Club, but as it was, when Tom turned into the Alley from Main Street, he saw Mr.

Temple's big limousine car standing in front of his own door.

If there was one thing in this world more than another dear to the heart of Tom Slade, it was a limousine car. Even an Italian organ-grinder did not offer the mischievous possibilities of a limousine. He had a regular formula for the treatment of limousines which was as sure of success as a "cure all."

Placing his pail inside the doorway, he approached the chauffeur with a suspiciously friendly air which boded mischief. After a strategic word or two of cordiality, he grasped the siren horn, tooted it frantically, pulled the timer around, opened one of the doors, jumped in and out of the opposite door, leaving both open, and retreated as far as the corner, calling,

"Yah-h-h-h-h!"

In a few minutes he returned very cautiously, sidled up to the house door, and took his belated way upstairs.

Tom placed his pail on the lower step of the stair leading up to the floor above his own, but did not enter the room whence emanated the stern voice of John Temple and the lying excuses of his father. He went down and out on the door-

step and sat on the railing, gazing at the chauffeur with an exasperating look of triumph.

"I wouldn' be no lousy Cho-fure," he began.

The chauffeur (who received twenty-five dollars a week) did not see the force of this remark.

"Runnin' over kids all de time—you lie, *yer did too!*"

The chauffeur looked straight ahead and uttered not a word.

"Yer'd be in jail if 'twuzn't fer old John paying graft ter the cops!"

The chauffeur, who knew his place, made never a sign.

"Yer stinkin' thief! Yer don't do a thing but cop de car fer joy-rides—didn' yer?"

At this the chauffeur stirred slightly.

"Yes, yer will!" yelled Tom, jumping down from the railing.

He had just picked up a stone, when the portly form of John Temple emerged from the door behind him.

"Put down that stone, sir, or I'll lock you up!" said he with the air of one who is accustomed to being obeyed.

"G-wan, he called me a liar!" shouted Tom.

"Well, that's just what you are," said John

Temple, "and if certain people of this town spent less for canvas uniforms to put on their boys to make tramps out of them, we should be able, perhaps, to build an addition to the jail."

"Ya-ah, an' you'd be de first one to go into it!" Tom yelled, as Temple reached the step of his car.

"What's that?" said Temple, turning suddenly.

"That's *what!*" shouted Tom, letting fly the stone. It went straight to its mark, removing "old" John's spring hat as effectually as a gust of wind, and leaving it embedded in the mud below the car.

"CAN'T YOU SEE WHAT THEY'RE A-DOIN?" ROARED HIS FATHER.

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CHAPTER III

IN JAIL AND OUT AGAIN

THAT night, when Tom Slade, all unaware of the tragedy which threatened his young life, shuffled into Billy's garage, he announced to his followers a plan which showed his master mind as leader of the gang.

"Hey," said he, "I heard Sissy Bennett's mother say she's goin' ter have a s'prise party fer him Friday night, 'n' d'yer know wot I'm goin' ter do?"

"Tell him and spoil it fer him?" ventured Joe Flynn.

"Na-a-h!"

"Tick-tack?" asked Slush Ryder.

"Na-ah, tick-tacks is out o' date."

"Cord ter trip 'em up?"

"Guess agin, guess agin," said Tom, exultantly.

But as no one ventured any further guesses, he announced his plan forthwith.

"Don't say a word—don't say a word," he ejac-

ulated. "I swiped two o' thim quarantine signs offen two doors, 'n' I'm gon'er tack one up on Sissy's door Friday night! Can yer beat it?"

None of them could beat it, for it was an inspiration. To turn away Master Connover's young guests by this simple but effectual device was worthy of the leadership qualities of Tom Slade. Having thus advertised the possibilities of the signs he took occasion to announce,

"I got anoder one, an' I'll sell it fer a dime." But even though he marked it down to a dime, none would buy, so he announced his intention of raffling it off.

Before the momentous evening of Connover's party arrived, however, something else happened which had a curious and indirect effect upon the carrying out of Tom's plan.

On Wednesday afternoon three men came down Barrel Alley armed with a paper for Bill Slade. It was full of "whereases" and "now, therefores" and other things which Bill did not comprehend, but he understood well enough the meaning of their errand.

The stone which Tom had thrown at John Temple had rebounded with terrific force!

One man would have been enough, goodness

knows, to do the job in hand, for there were only six or seven pieces of furniture. They got in each other's way a good deal and spat tobacco juice, while poor helpless, inefficient Bill Slade stood by watching them.

From various windows and doors the neighbors watched them too, and some congratulated themselves that their own rents were paid, while others wondered what would become of poor Tom now.

This was the scene which greeted Tom as he came down Barrel Alley from school.

"Wot are they doin'?" he asked.

"Can't you see wot they're a-doin'?" roared his father. "'Tain't them that's doin' it neither, it's *you—you done it!!* It's *you* took the roof from over my head, you and old John Temple!" Advancing menacingly, he poured forth a torrent of abuse at his wretched son.

"The two o' yez done it! You wid yer rocks and him wid his dirty marshals and judges! I'll get the both o' yez yet! Ye sneakin' rat!"

He would have struck Tom to the ground if Mrs. O'Connor, a mournful figure in shoddy black, had not crossed the street and forced her way between them.

"'Twas *you* done it, Bill Slade, and not him. and don't you lay yer hand on him—mind that! 'Twas you an' your whiskey bottle done it, you lazy loafer, an' the street is well rid o' you. Don't you raise your hand agin me, Bill Slade—I'm not afraid o' the likes o' you. I tell you 'twas *you* sent the poor boy's mother to her grave—you and your whiskey bottle!"

"I—I—ain't scared uv him!" said Tom.

"You stay right here now and don't be foolish, and me an' you'll go over an' have a cup o' coffee."

Just then one of the men emerged bearing in one arm the portrait of the late Mrs. Slade and in the other hand Bill Slade's battered but trusty beer can. The portrait he laid face up on the table and set the can on it.

Perhaps it is expecting too much to assume that a city marshal would have any sense of the fitness of things, but it was an unfortunate moment to make such a mistake. As Mrs. O'Connor lifted the pail a dirty ring remained on the face of the portrait.

"D'yer see wot yer done?" shrieked Tom, rushing at the marshal. "D'yer see wot yer done?"

There was no stopping him. With a stream of

profanity he rushed at the offending marshal, grabbing him by the neck, and the man's head shook and swayed as if it were in the grip of a mad dog.

It was in vain that poor Mrs. O'Connor attempted to intercede, catching hold of the infuriated boy and calling,

"Oh, Tommy, for the dear Lord's sake, stop and listen to me!"

Tom did not even hear.

The marshal, his face red and his eyes staring, went down into the mud of Barrel Alley and the savage, merciless pounding of his face could be heard across the way.

While the other marshals pulled Tom off his half-conscious victim, the younger contingent came down the street escorting a sauntering blue-coat, who swung his club leisurely and seemed quite master of the situation.

"He kilt him, he kilt him!" called little Sadie McCarren.

Tom, his scraggly hair matted, his face streaming, his chest heaving, and his ragged clothing bespattered, stood hoisting up his suspender, safe in the custody of the other two marshals.

"Take this here young devil around to the sta-

tion," said one of the men, "for assault and battery and interferin' with an officer of the law in the performance of his dooty."

"Come along, Tom," said the policeman; "in trouble again, eh?"

"Can't yer leave him go just this time?" pleaded Mrs. O'Connor. "He ain't himself at all—yer kin see it."

"Take him in," said the rising victim, "for interferin' with an officer of the law in the performance of dooty."

"Where's his folks?" the policeman asked, not unkindly.

It was then the crowd discovered that Bill Slade had disappeared.

"I'll have to take you along," said the officer.

Tom said never a word. He had played his part in the proceedings, and he was through.

"Couldn't yer leave him come over jist till I make him a cup o' coffee?" Mrs. O'Connor begged.

"They'll give him his dinner at the station, ma'am," the policeman answered.

Mrs. O'Connor stood there choking as Tom was led up the street, the full juvenile force of Barrel Alley thronging after him.

"Wouldn' yer leave me pull my strap up?" he asked the policeman.

The officer released his arm, taking him by the neck instead, and the last that Mrs. O'Connor saw Tom was hauling his one rebellious strand of suspender up into place.

"Poor lad, I don't know what'll become uv him now," said Mrs. O'Connor, pausing on her doorstep to speak with a neighbor.

"And them things over there an' night comin' on," said her companion. "I wisht that alarm clock was took away—seems as if 'twas laughin' at the whole thing—like."

"'Tain't only his bein' arrested," said Mrs. O'Connor, "but ther' ain't no hope for him at all, as I kin see. Ther's no one can in*floo*ence him."

In Court, the next morning, the judge ruled out all reference to the disfigurement of Mrs. Slade's portrait as being "incompetent and irrelevant," and when the "assault and battery" could not be made to seem "an act done in self-defense and by reason of the imminent peril of the accused," Tom was taken to the "jug" to spend the balance of the day and to ponder on the discovery that a "guy" has no right to "slam" a marshal just

because he sets a dirty beer can on his mother's picture.

His first enterprise after his liberation was a flank move on Schmitt's Grocery where he stole a couple of apples and a banana, which latter he ate going along the street. These were his only luncheon. The banana skin he threw on the pavement.

In a few moments he heard footsteps behind him and, turning, saw a small boy coming along dangling the peel he had dropped. The boy was a jaunty little fellow, wearing a natty spring suit. It was, in fact, "Pee-wee" Harris, Tenderfoot, who was just starting out to cover Provision 5 of the Second Class Scout requirements, for he was going to be a Second Class Scout before camping-time, or know the reason why.

"You drop that?" he asked pleasantly.

"Ye-re, you kin have it," said Tom cynically.

"Thanks," said Pee-wee, and the banana peel went sailing over the fence into Temple's lot.

"First thing you know somebody'd get a free ride on that thing," said Pee-wee.

"Ye-re?" said Tom sneeringly.

"And if anybody got anything free near John Temple's property——"

"Dere's where yer said it, kiddo," said Tom, approvingly.

"So long," said Pee-wee, and went gaily on, walking a little, then running a little, then walking again, until Tom thought he must be crazy. Happening just at that minute to finish one of his apples (or rather one of Schmitt's apples) he let fly the core straight for the back of Pee-wee's head.

Then a most extraordinary thing happened. Without so much as turning round, Pee-wee raised his hand, caught the core, threw it over into the lot, and then, turning, laughed, "Thanks, good shot!"

Tom had always supposed that the back of a person's head was a safe target, and he could not comprehend the instinct which was so alert and highly-tuned that it could work entirely independent of the eyes. But this was merely one of Pee-wee's specialties, and his amazing progress from Tenderfoot to Star Scout is a story all by itself.

Tom hoisted himself onto the board fence and attacked the other apple. Just then along came "Sweet Caporal" demanding the core.

"Gimme it 'n' I'll put yer wise ter sup'm."

Tom made the speculation.

"Wop Joe's around de corner wid his pushcart; wot d'ye say we give him de spill?"

They were presently joined by "Slats" Corbett, and the "Two Aces," Jim and Jake Mattenberg, and shortly thereafter Wop Joe's little candy-stand was carried by assault.

The gum-drops and chocolate bars which did not find their way into the pockets of the storming host, were strewn about the street, the whistle of the peanut-roaster was broken off and Tom went scooting down the street tooting it vigorously.

This affair scattered the gang for the time, and presently Tom and "Sweet Caporal" found themselves together. They got an empty bottle from an ash wagon, broke it and distributed the pieces along Broad Street, which they selected as a sort of "mine area" for the embarrassment of auto traffic.

Tom then shuffled into the Public Library, ostensibly to read, but in fact to decorate the books according to his own theories of art, and was ejected because he giggled and scuffed his feet and interfered with the readers.

It would not be edifying to follow Tom's shuf-

fling footsteps that afternoon, nor to enumerate the catalogue of unseemly phrase and vicious mischief which filled the balance of the day. He wound up his career of glory by one of the most contemptible things which he had ever done. He went up at dusk and tacked his quarantine sign to the outer gate of the Bennett place.

"Gee, I hope they're all home," he said.

They *were* all at home and Mrs. Bennett, whom he hated, was busy with preparation and happy anticipations for her unsuspecting son. That the wretched plan did not succeed was due to no preparatory omission on the part of Tom, but because something happened which changed the whole face of things.

CHAPTER IV

CAMP SOLITAIRE

TOM's visit to the Library reminded him that it was here "them regiment fellers" met, and since it was near the Bennett place he decided to loiter thereabout, partly for the ineffable pleasure of beholding the side-tracking of Connover's party, and partly in the hope of seeing Mr. Ellsworth again.

So he shuffled around a little before dark and did sentinel duty between the two places. He wanted something to eat very much indeed, and he surmised that such a sympathetic fellow as young Mr. Ellsworth would "give him the lend of a nickel" especially if he were tipped off in regard to the coming ball game.

Standing outside, Tom heard the uproarious laughter through the basement windows and wondered what it was all about. Strange that fellows could be enjoying themselves so thoroughly who were not up to some kind of mischief.

Presently, the basement door opened and the scouts began to come out. Tom loitered in the shadow across the way.

The first group paused on the sidewalk bent on finishing their discussion as to whether "whipping" was as good as splicing for two strands of rope. One boy insisted that splicing was the only way if you knew how to do it, but that you had to whittle a splicing needle.

"I wouldn't trust *my* weight on any double whipping," said another fellow. "The binding wouldn't stand salt water—not unless you tarred it."

"If *my* little snow-white hand is going to grab that loop, it'll be spliced," said the first speaker.

Another boy came out and said *he* could jump the gap without any rope at all; it was only seven feet, and what was the use of a rope anyway? Then someone said that Pee-wee would do it scout pace, and there was a great laugh. The group went on up the street.

Then out came the renowned Pee-wee himself in hot pursuit of them, running a little, walking a little, according to his habit.

Two more boys came out and one of them said it was going to rain to-morrow. Tom wondered

how he knew. Then three or four of the Ravens appeared and one said it would be a great stunt if they could work that on the Silver Foxes at midnight.

Tom didn't know what the Silver Foxes were (he knew there were no foxes in Bridgeboro), and he had no notion what "that" meant, but he liked the idea of doing it at midnight. He would like to be mixed up in something which was done at midnight himself.

But his trusty pal, Mr. Ellsworth, did not appear. Whether he was absent that evening, Tom never knew. The last ones to emerge from the Library basement, were a couple of boys who were talking about dots and dashes.

"You want to make your dot flares shorter," one said.

"Shall I tell you what I'm going to say?" the other asked.

"No, sure not, let me dope it out."

"Well, then, get on the job as soon as you reach home."

"All right, then I won't say good-night till later. So long."

"See you to-morrow."

How these two expected to say good night with-

out seeing each other Tom could not imagine, but he thought it had something to do with "dot flares"; in any event, it was something very mysterious and was to be done that night. He rather liked the idea of it.

The two boys separated, one going up toward Blakeley's Hill and pausing to glance at the quarantine sign on the Bennett house as he passed. Tom was rather surprised that he noticed it since he seemed to be in a hurry, but he followed, resolved to "slam" the fellow if he took it down.

Then there came into his head the bright idea that if he followed this boy up the hill to an unfrequented spot he could hold him up for a nickel.

A little way up the hill the boy suddenly turned and stood waiting for him. Tom was hardly less than amazed at this for he had thought that his pursuit was not known. When they came face to face Tom saw that it was none other than the "half-baked galook" Roy Blakeley.

He wore the full Scout regalia which fitted him to perfection, and upon his left breast Tom could see a ribbon with something bright depending from it, which seemed to be in the shape of a bird. He had a trim figure and stood very

straight, and about his neck was a loosely-knotted scarf of a silvery gray color, showing quite an expanse of bare throat. His sleeves were rolled up to his elbows, and on one wrist he wore a leather band.

"What are you following me for?" he asked.

"Who's follerin' yer?"

"You are."

"I ain't follerin' yer neither."

"Yes, you are."

"Yer mean ter tell me I'm lyin'?" shouted Tom, advancing with a threatening air.

"Sure."

Tom's hulking form was within a few inches of Blakeley and he thrust forward his lowered head and held his clenched fist conveniently ready at his side, but Roy did not budge. On the contrary, he seemed rather amused. He did not scare worth a cent.

"Yer want me ter hand ye one?"

"No, sure not."

"Well then, was I lyin'?"

"Surest thing you know."

There was a pause.

"Gimme a nickel 'n' I'll leave ye off," said Tom magnanimously.

The boy laughed and asked, "What do you want the nickel for?"

"Fer a cup o' coffee."

Roy paused a minute, biting his lip ruminatively, frankly contemplating him.

"I can make you a better cup of coffee," said he, "than any lunch wagon juggler in this town. You're halfway up the hill now; come on up the rest of the way—just for a stunt. Ever up on the hill?"

Tom hesitated.

"Come on, you're not in a hurry to get home, are you? I'll give you some plum-duff I made and you can have a belt axe to chop it with if you want to. Come on, just for a stunt."

"Who's up dere?"

"Just 'Yours sincerely.'"

"Yer live in de big house, don'cher?"

"Not fer me; guess again. Nay, nay, my boy, *I* live in Camp Solitaire, with a ring round it. Anybody steps inside that ring gets his wrist slapped and two demerits. I let the house stay there on account of my mother and father and the cat. Don't you worry, you won't get within two hundred feet of the house. The house and I don't speak."

Tom, half suspicious but wanting a cup of coffee, shuffled along at Roy's side. The scout's offhand manner and rather whimsical way of talking took the wind out of his belligerence, and he allowed himself so far to soften toward this "rich guy" as to say,

"Me an' our house don't speak neither; we wuz chucked."

"Chucked?"

"Ye-re, put out. Old John Temple done it, but I'm hunk all right."

"When was that?"

"Couple o' days ago."

He told the story of the eviction and his companion listened as they plodded up the hill.

"Well," said Roy, "I haven't slept indoors for two weeks, and I'm not going to for the next six weeks. And the best way to get hunk on a fellow that puts you out of a house is just to sleep outdoors. They can't put you out of there very well. Camp, and you've got the laugh on them!"

"Gee, I thought nobuddy but poor guys slep' outdoors."

"It's the poor guys that sleep *indoors,*" said Roy.

"Don' de wind git on ye?"

"Sure—gets all over you; it's fine."

"My father give *me* a raw hand-out, all right, and then some more."

"Well, there's no use fighting your pack."

"Yer what?"

"Your pack—as Dan Beard says."

"Who's he—one o' your crowd?"

"You bet he is. 'Fighting your pack' is scrapping with your job—with what can't be helped—kind of. See?"

They walked along in silence, Tom's half-limping sideways gait in strange contrast with his companion's carriage, and soon entered the spacious grounds of the big old-fashioned house which crowned the summit of Blakeley's Hill, one of the show places of the town.

"Can you jump that hedge?" said Roy, as he leaped over it. "This'll be your first sleep outdoors, won't it? If you wake up all of a sudden and hear a kind of growling don't get scared—it's only the trees."

Under a spacious elm, a couple of hundred feet from the house, was a little tent with a flagpole near it.

"That's where Old Glory hangs out, but she goes to bed at sunset. That's what gives her such

rosy cheeks. We'll hoist her up and give her the salute in the morning."

Near the tent was a small fire place of stones, with a rough bench by it and a chair fashioned from a grocery box. Before the entrance stood two poles and on a rough board across these were painted the words, CAMP SOLITAIRE, as Tom saw by the light of the lantern which Roy held up for a moment.

The tent was furnished with a cot, blankets, mosquito-netting, several books on a little shelf, and magazines strewn about with BOYS' LIFE on their covers. On the central upright was a little shelf with a reflector for the lantern, and close to the pole a rickety steamer chair with a cushion or two. The place looked very inviting.

"Now this out here," said Roy, "is my signal pedestal. You know Westy Martin, don't you? He's patrol leader, and he and I are trying out the Morse code; you'll see me hand him one to-night. We're trying it by searchlight first, then later we'll get down to the real fire works. He lives out on the Hillside Road a little way."

The signal pedestal was a little tower with a platform on top reached by a ladder.

"Doesn't need to be very high, you see, because

you can throw a searchlight way up, but we use it daytimes for flag work. Here's the searchlight," Roy added, unwrapping it from a piece of canvas. "Belongs on the touring car, but I use it. I let my father use it on the car sometimes—if he's good.

"Now for the coffee. Sit right down on that parlor chair, but don't lean too far back. Like it strong? No? Right you are. Wait a minute, the lantern's smoking. Never thought what you were up against to-night, did you? You're kidnapped and don't know it. By the time we're through the eats Westy'll be home and we'll say good-night to him.

"Can you beat that valley for signalling? Westy's nearly as high up as we are. Now for the fire and then the plum-duff. Don't be afraid of it—you can only die once. Wish I had some raisin pudding, but my mother turned me down on raisins to-day."

He sat down on the ground near Tom, scaled his hat into the tent, drew his knees up, and breathed a long, exaggerated sigh of fatigue after his few minutes' exertion.

"Let's see, what was I going to ask you? Oh, yes; how'd you get hunk on John Temple?"

"Put a quarantine sign on Sissy Bennett's house."

"What?"

"Sure; didn't yer see it?"

"What for?"

"He's a rich guy, ain't he?"

Roy looked at him, puzzled.

"Dere's a gang comin' over from Hillside ter s'prise him to-night."

"In a car?"

"Ye-re. An' I put de sign up fer ter sidetrack 'em."

"You did?"

In the glare of the glowing fire Roy looked straight at Tom. "How will that—what good——" he began; then paused and continued to look curiously at him with the same concentrated gaze with which he would have studied a trail by night. But that was not for long. A light came into his eyes. Hurriedly he took out his watch and looked at it.

"Nine o'clock," he said, thoughtfully; "they must have started back."

He rose, all the disgust gone from his face, and slapped Tom on the shoulder.

"Ain't he a rich guy?" explained Tom.

"Never mind that," said Roy. "I'm glad you told me—I'm going to show you something as sure as you're a foot high! You and I are going to have the time of our lives to-night, and *don't you forget it!*"

CHAPTER V

CONNOVER'S PARTY

"QUICK, now, hand me the light and look out you don't trip on the wires. If they once get past Westy's house—g-o-o-d-*night!* Just inside the garage door there you'll see a switch—turn it on. Here, take the lantern. If Westy don't get this right, we'll kill him."

Tom, with but the haziest idea of what was to be done, followed directions. It evidently had something to do with the mysterious "dot flares" and with his own mean act. These excited nocturnal activities had a certain charm, and if it wasn't mischief Roy was up to it had at least all the attractive qualities of mischief.

"You'll see a book just inside the tent—paper covered—hand me that too, and come up yourself. Look out for the wires," cautioned Roy.

He opened the Scout Handbook to about the middle and laid it flat on the tower rail.

"That's the Morse Code," said he, "easy as eating ice cream when you once get the hang of it.

I know it by heart but I'm going to let you read them to me so as to be sure. Better be sure than be sorry—hey? I hope they don't speed that auto till we get through with them."

"Can he answer?" ventured Tom.

"No, they haven't got a car at Westy's and no searchlight. He brings me the message all writ, wrot, wrote out, in the morning. They've got a dandy team there, though. Cracky, I'd rather have a pair of horses than an auto any day, wouldn't you. Now be patient, Conny dear, and we'll see what we can do for you."

"It's a long, long way to Tip—Hillside. Do you s'pose Westy's home yet? Oh yes, sure, he must be. Well, here we go—take the lantern and read off the ones I ask for and get them right or I'll make you eat another plate of plum-duff! Feeding with intent to kill, hey?"

Tom couldn't help laughing; Roy's phrases had a way of popping out like a Jack-in-the-Box.

He had a small makeshift wooden bracket which stood on a grocery box on the tower platform, and in this the auto searchlight swung.

"Wait a second now till I give him 'Attention' and then we're off. Guess you must have seen this light from downtown, hey?"

"Ye-re, I wondered what 'twas."

"Well, here's where you find out."

There was a little click as he turned the switch, and then a long straight column of misty light shot up into the darkness, bisecting the heavens. Far over to the west it swung, then far to the east, while Tom watched it, fascinated. Then he heard the click of the switch again and darkness reigned, save for the myriad stars.

It was the first time in his life that Tom had ever been charged with a real responsibility, and he waited nervously.

"That meant, 'Get ready,' " said Roy. "We'll give him time to sharpen his pencil. Do you pull much of a stroke with Machelsa, the Indian spirit? She smiles a smile at me once in a while, and if you want her to see you through any kind of a stunt you just rub your cheek with one hand while you pat your forehead with the other; try it."

"Can't do it, eh?" he laughed. "That's one of Mr. Ellsworth's stunts; he got us all started on that. You'd think the whole troop was crazy."

"I know him," said Tom.

"He's the worst of the lot," said Roy. "Well, off we go, let's have S—call them dots and lines;

some say 'dashes' but lines is quicker if you're working fast."

"T'ree dots," said Tom.

Three sudden flashes shot up into the sky, quickly, one after another.

"Now T."

"Line," said Tom.

The switch clicked, and the long misty column rose again, remaining for several seconds.

"Now O."

"T'ree lines," said Tom, getting excited.

"Now P—and be careful—it's a big one."

"I'm on de job," said Tom, becoming more enthusiastic as he became more sure of himself. "Dot—line—line—dot."

The letter was printed on the open page of the heavens and down in Barrel Alley two of the O'Connor boys sitting on the rickety railing watched the lights and wondered what they meant.

So, across the intervening valley to Westy's home, the message was sent. The khaki-clad boy, with rolled-up sleeves, whose brown hand held the little porcelain switch, was master of the night and of the distance, and the other watched him admiringly.

Down at the Western Union office in Bridgeboro, the operator sauntered out in his shirt-sleeves and smilingly watched the distant writing, which he understood.

> Stop all autos send car with young folks back to Bennett's sure not practice serious.

"Good-night," said Roy, and two fanlike swings of the misty column told that it was over. "If they haven't passed Westy's yet, we win. Shake, Tom," he added, gayly, "You did fine—you're a fiend at it! Wouldn't you rather be here than at Conny's party—honest?"

"Would I?"

"Now we'll rustle down the hill and see the bunch come back—if they do. Oh, cracky, don't you hope they do?"

"Do I?" said Tom.

"Like the Duke of Yorkshire, hey? Ever hear of him? Up the hill and down again. We'll bring the sign up for a souvenir, what do you say?"

"Mebbe it oughter go back where it come from," said Tom, slowly.

"Guess you're right."

"Ever go scout's pace?" said Roy.

"What's that?"

"Fifty running—fifty walking. Try it and you'll use no other. Come on! The kind of pace you've always wanted," said Roy, jogging along. "Beware of substitutes."

It was just about the time when Roy was showing Tom his camp that a big touring car rolled silently up to the outer gate of the Bennett place. (The house stood well back from the road.) The car was crowded with young people of both sexes, and it was evident from their expressions of surprise and disappointment that they saw the yellow sign on the gate.

There were a few moments of debate; some one suggested tooting the horn, but another thought that might disturb the patient; one proposed going to the house door and inquiring, while still another thought it would be wiser not to. Some one said something about 'phoning in the morning; a girl remarked that the last time she saw Connover he had a headache and looked pale, and indeed Connover's general weakness, together with the epidemic which prevailed in Bridgeboro, made the appearance of the sign perfectly plausible.

The upshot was that the auto rolled away and turned into the Hillside Turnpike. Scarcely had it gone out of sight when a patch of light flickered across the lawn, the shade was drawn from a window and the figure of Mrs. Bennett appeared peering out anxiously.

Ten minutes out of Bridgeboro, as the big car silently rolled upon the Hillside Turnpike, one of its disappointed occupants (a girl) called,

"Oh, see the searchlight!"

"Oh, look," said another.

The long, misty column was swinging across the heavens.

"Now you see it, now you don't," laughed one of the fellows, as Tom's utterance of "Dot," sent a sudden shaft of light into the sky and out again as quickly.

"Where is it, do you suppose?" asked one of the girls.

"Does it mean anything?" asked another.

It meant nothing to them, for there was not a scout in the car. And yet a mile or two farther along the dark road there hung a lantern on an upright stick, directly in their path, and scrawled upon a board below it was the word, "Stop."

Out of the darkness stepped a figure in a white

sweater (for the night was growing cold) and a large-brimmed brown felt hat. One of his arms was braced akimbo on his hip, the other hand he laid on the wind shield of the throbbing auto.

"Excuse me, did you come from Bennett's in Bridgeboro?"

"Yes, we did," said a musical voice.

"Then you'd better turn and go back; there's a message here which says so."

"Back to Bennett's? Really?"

"I'll read it to you," said the boy in the white sweater.

He held a slip of yellow paper down in front of one of the acetylene headlights, and read,

"Stop all autos, send car with young folks back to Bennett's, sure." (He did not read the last three words on the paper.)

"Did you *ever* in *all* your *life* know anything so perfectly extraordinary?" said a girl.

"You can turn better right up there," said Westy. He was a quiet, uncommunicative lad.

The sign was gone from the Bennetts' gate when the car returned, and the two boys standing in the shadow across the way, saw the party go up the drive and disappear into the house; there was still plenty of time for the festive program.

They never knew what was said on the subject of the sign and the mysterious telegram.

They kept it up at Bennetts' till long after midnight. They played "Think of a Number," and "Button, button, who's got the button?" and wore tissue-paper caps which came out of tinselled snappers, and had ice cream and lady-fingers and macaroons and chicken salad.

When Connover went to bed, exhausted but happy, Mrs. Bennett tripped softly in to say good-night to him and to see that he had plenty of fresh air by "opening the window a little at the top."

"Isn't it much better, dearie," she said, seating herself for a moment on the edge of the bed, "to find your pleasure right here than to be tramping over the country and building bonfires, and getting your clothing all filled with smoke from smudge signals, or whatever they call them, and catching your death of cold playing with searchlights, like that Blakeley boy up on the hill? It's just a foolish, senseless piece of business, taking a boy's thoughts away from home, and no good can ever come of it."

CHAPTER VI

HITTING THE BULL'S EYE

WHAT did Tom Slade do after the best night's sleep he ever had? He went to Mrs. O'Connor's, where he knew he was welcome, and washed his face and hands. More than that, he attended to his lessons in school that day, to the teacher's astonishment. And why? Because he knew it was right? Not much! But because he was anxious not to be kept in that afternoon for he wanted to go down and peek through the fence of Temple's lot, to see if there were any more wonders performed; to try to get a squint at Mr. Ellsworth and Westy.

In short, Tom Slade had the Scout bug; he could not escape it now. He had thrown it off once before, but that was a milder dose.

As luck would have it, that very afternoon he had an amusing sidelight on the scouting business which gave him his first knowledge of the "good turn" idea, and a fresh glimpse of the character of Roy Blakeley.

Inside Temple's lot the full troop was holding forth in archery practice and Tom peered through a knothole and later ventured to a better viewpoint on top of the fence.

When any sort of game or contest is going on it is absolutely necessary to the boy beholder that he pick some favorite whom he hopes to see win, and Tom lost no time in singling Roy out as the object of his preference.

It was not a bad choice. As Roy stood sideways to the target, his feet firmly planted, one bared brown arm extended horizontally and holding the gracefully curving bow, and the other, bent but still horizontal, holding the arrow in the straining cord, he made an attractive picture.

"Here's where I take the pupil out of the Bull's-eye," he said, and the arrow flew entirely free of the target.

"No sooner said than stung!" shouted Pee-wee Harris.

"Oh, look who's going to try,—mother, mother, pin a rose on me!" shouted another boy.

"Mother, mother, turn the hose on me," called another.

"Stand from behind in case the arrow goes backwards!"

"I bet he hits that fellow on the fence!"

Tom could not help laughing as Mr. Ellsworth, with unruffled confidence, stepped in place.

"Oi—oi—oi—here's where Hiawatha turns over in his grave!"

It surprised Tom quite a little that they did not seem to stand at all in awe of the scoutmaster. One boy began ostentatiously passing his hat around.

"For the benefit of Sitting Bull Ellsworth," said he, "highest salaried artist in Temple's lot —positively last appearance this side of the Rockies!"

But "Sitting Bull" Ellsworth had the laugh on them all. Straight inside the first ring went his arrow, and he stepped aside and gave an exceedingly funny wink at Tom on the fence.

Tom changed his favorite.

Presently Roy sauntered over to the fence and spoke to him. "Regular shark at it, isn't he?"

"Which one is Westy?" Tom asked.

"Westy? That fellow right over there with the freckles. If you get up close you can see the Big Dipper on his left cheek. He's got Orion under his ear too."

"O'Brien?"

"No, Orion—it's a bunch of stars. Oh, he's a regular walking firmament."

Tom stared at Westy. It seemed odd that the invisible being who had caught that message out of the darkness and turned the car back, should be right here, hobnobbing with other mortals.

"Come over here, Westy," shouted Roy, "I want Tom Slade to see your freck—well, I'll be—if this one hasn't shifted way over to the other side. Westy's our chart of the heavens. This is the fellow that helped send you the message last night, Westy. He ate two plates of plum-duff and he lives to tell the tale."

"I understand Roy kidnapped you," said Westy.

"It was fun all right," said Tom.

"Too bad his parents put him out, wasn't it?" said Westy.

"Did you ever taste any of his biscuits?" asked another fellow, who sauntered over. They formed a little group just below Tom.

"We've got two of them in the Troop Room we use for bullets," he continued.

"What do you think of Camp Solitaire?" Westy asked.

Tom knew well enough that they were making

fun of each other, but he did not exactly know how to participate in this sort of "guying."

" 'Sall right," said he, rather weakly.

"What do you think of the Eifel Tower?"

" 'Sall right."

"Did he show you the Indian moccasins Julia made for him?"

This precipitated a wrestling match and Tom Slade witnessed the slow but sure triumph of science, as one after another the last speaker's arms, legs, back, neck and finally his head, yielded to the invincible process of Roy's patient efforts until the victim lay prone upon the grass.

"Is Camp Solitaire all right?" Roy demanded, laughing.

"Sure," said the victim and sprang up, liberated.

Tom's interest in these pleasantries was interrupted by the voice of Mr. Ellsworth.

"Come over here and try your hand, my boy."

"Sure, go ahead," encouraged Westy, as the group separated for him to jump down.

"*I* couldn' hit it," hesitated Tom, abashed.

"Neither could he," retorted Roy, promptly.

"If you let him get away with the championship," said another boy, indicating the scoutmas-

ter, "he'll have such a swelled head he won't speak to us for a month. Come ahead down and make a stab at it, just for a stunt. You couldn't do worse than Blakeley."

Everything was a "stunt" with the scouts.

Reluctantly, and smiling, half pleased and half ashamed, Tom let himself down into the field and went over to where the scoutmaster waited, bow and arrow in hand.

"A little more sideways, my boy," said Mr. Ellsworth; "turn this foot out a little; bend your fingers like this, see? Ah, that's it. Now pull it right back to your shoulder—one—two—three——" The arrow shot past the target, a full three yards shy of it, past the Ravens' patrol flag planted near by, and just grazed the portly form of Mr. John Temple, who came cat-a-cornered across the field from the gate.

A dead silence prevailed.

"I presume you have permission to use this property," demanded Mr. Temple in thundering tones.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Temple," said the scoutmaster.

"Good afternoon, sir. Will you be good enough to let me see your authority for the use

of these grounds?" he demanded frigidly. "If I gave any such permission I cannot seem to recall it."

"I am afraid, Mr. Temple," said Mr. Ellsworth, "that we can show no written word on——"

"Ah, yes," said the bank president, conclusively, "and is it a part of your program to teach young boys to take and use what does not belong to them?"

The scoutmaster flushed slightly. "No, that is quite foreign to our program, Mr. Temple. Some weeks ago, happening to meet your secretary I asked him whether we might use this field for practice since it is in a central and convenient part of town, and he told me he believed there would be no objection. Perhaps I should have——"

"And you are under the impression that this field belongs to my secretary?" asked Mr. Temple, hotly. "If you have nothing better to do with yourself than to play leader to a crew of——"

Here Mr. Ellsworth interrupted him.

"We will leave the field at once, sir."

"When *I* was a young man," said Mr. Temple, with frosty condescension, "I had something more

important to do with myself than to play Wild West with a pack of boys."

"There were more open fields in those days," said the scoutmaster, pleasantly.

"And perhaps that is why my wealth grows now."

"Very likely; and the movement which these boys represent," Mr. Ellsworth added with a suggestion of pride in his voice, "is growing quite as fast as any man's wealth."

"Indeed, sir! Do you know that this boy's father owes me money?" said Mr. Temple, coldly indicating Tom.

"Very likely."

"And that the boy is a hoodlum?"

Mr. Ellsworth bit his lip, hesitatingly. "Yes, I know that, Mr. Temple," he said.

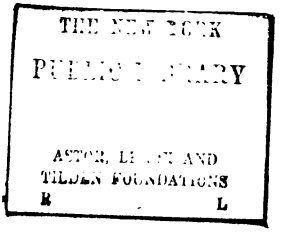
"And a thief and a liar?"

"Don't run, Tom," whispered Roy.

"No, I *don't* know that. Suppose we talk apart, Mr. Temple."

"We will talk right here, and there'll be very little talking indeed. If you think I am a public target, sir, you are quite mistaken! You clear out of this lot and keep out of it, or you'll go to jail—the whole pack of you! A man is known

"NEITHER YOU NOR ANY OTHER MAN CAN BREAK UP THIS MOVEMENT." Page 60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by the company he keeps. If you choose to cast your lot with children—and hoodlums and rowdies—— I could send that boy to jail if I wanted to," he broke off. "*You know* he's a vicious character and yet you——"

The Scoutmaster looked straight into the eyes of the enraged Temple, and there was a little prophetic ring in his voice as he answered.

"I'm afraid it would be hard to say at present just what he is, Mr. Temple. I was thinking just a few minutes ago, as I saw him dangling his legs up there, that he was on the fence in more ways than one. I suppose we can push him down on either side we choose."

"There's a right and wrong side to every fence, young man."

"There is indeed."

"As every good citizen should know; a public side and a private side."

"He has always been on the wrong side of the fence hitherto, Mr. Temple." Mr. Ellsworth held out his hand and instinctively Tom shuffled toward him and allowed the scoutmaster's arm to encircle his shoulder. Roy Blakeley elbowed his way among the others as if it were appropriate that he should be at Tom's side.

"I have no wish to interfere with this 'movement' or whatever you call it," said John Temple, sarcastically, "provided you keep off my property. If you don't do that I'll put the thumb-screws on and see what the law can do, and break up your 'movement' into the bargain!"

"The law is helpless, Mr. Temple," said Mr. Ellsworth. "Oh, it has failed utterly. I wish I could make you see that. As for breaking up the movement," he continued in quite a different tone, "that is all sheer bluster, if you'll allow me to say so."

"What!" roared John Temple.

"Neither you nor any other man can break up this movement."

"As long as there are jails——"

"As long as there are woods and fields. But I see there is no room for discussion. We will not trespass again, sir; Mr. Blakeley's hill is ours for the asking. But you might as well try to bully the sun as to talk about breaking up this movement, Mr. John Temple. It is like a dog barking at a train of cars."

"Do you know," said the capitalist, in a towering rage, "that this boy hurled a stone at me only a week ago?"

"I do not doubt it; and what are we going to do about it?"

"Do about it?" roared John Temple.

"Yes, do about it. The difference between you and me, Mr. Temple, is that you are thinking of what this boy did a week ago, and I am thinking of what *he is going to do to-morrow.*"

The boys had the last word in this affair and it was blazoned forth with a commanding emphasis which shamed "old John's" most wrathful utterance. It was Roy Blakeley's idea, and it was exactly like him.

He invited the whole troop (Tom included) up to Camp Solitaire and there, before the sun was too low, they printed in blazing red upon a good-sized board the words

TRESPASSING PROHIBITED
UNDER PENALTY OF THE LAW

When darkness had fallen this was erected upon two uprights projecting above the top of Temple's board fence.

"He'll be sure to see it," commented Roy, "and it's what he always needed."

When a carpenter arrived on the scene the next

morning to put up such a sign, as per instructions, he went back and told John Temple that there was a very good one there already, and asked what was the use of another.

It was the kind of thing that Roy Blakeley was in the habit of doing—a good turn with a dash of pepper in it.

CHAPTER VII

"ON MY HONOR"

DURING the next few days a dreadful document appeared which had to do with Tom, though he never saw it and only heard of it indirectly. Whence it emanated and what became of it he never knew, but he knew it was originated by the "rich guys" and that Mrs. Bennett and John Temple and the Probation Officer and the Judge had something to do with it.

It said that "Whereas one Thomas Slade, aged fourteen, son of William Slade, whereabouts unknown, and Annie Slade, deceased, was an unprotected minor, etc., etc., that said Thomas Slade should therefore be brought into court by somebody or other at a certain particular time, for commitment as a city charge," and so forth and so on. There was a good deal more to it than this, but this was the part of it which Tom heard of, and he rose in rebellion.

He had been sleeping, sometimes at Mrs.

O'Connor's and sometimes up at Camp Solitaire with Roy, as the fancy took him. When the news of what was under way fell like a thunderbolt upon him, in a frenzy of apprehension he went to Mr. Ellsworth.

Mr. Ellsworth himself went to court on the fatal day. The judge asked what facilities the "Scout movement" had for handling a boy like Tom Slade and whether they had an "institution." He thought Tom might be placed under the supervision of competent people in the Home for Wayward Boys. The Probation Officer said that was just the place for Tom for he had a "vicious proclivity." Tom thought presently he would be accused of having stolen that, whatever it was. Happily, though, in the end, he was committed to Mr. Ellsworth's care and he and Tom went forth together.

"Now Tom," said the Scoutmaster, "you and I are going to have a little pow-wow—you know what a pow-wow is? Well, then I'll tell you. When the Indians get together to chin about important matters, they call it a pow-wow. They usually hold it sitting around a camp fire, and we'll do that too when we get to Salmon River, for the Indians haven't got anything on us. But we'll

have our first pow-wow right now walking along the street. What do you say?"

"Yer—yessir."

"You heard the judge say you haven't any relations and, in a way, he was right, but he was mistaken, too, for a scout is a brother to every other scout and you've got lots of brothers, thousands of them; or will have when you get to be a scout. And after you get to be a scout, why you'll have a pretty big pack to carry. The question is, can you carry it?"

"Yessir."

"You'll have to carry the pack for all these brothers of yours. If *you* make a slip—tell a lie or throw a stone or interfere with Ching Wo—everybody'll say it's the Boy Scouts. Just the same as if Roy Blakeley should send a flash message wrong. The telegraph operator would give us the laugh and say the Scouts didn't know what they were doing. You and I'd get the blame as well as Roy. So you see, Roy's got a pretty big pack to carry, but he manages to stagger along with it.

"You may have noticed that the Scouts are great fellows for laughing. If there's any laughing to be done, we're going to be the ones to do

it. We don't let anybody else have the laugh. That's our middle name—laughter.

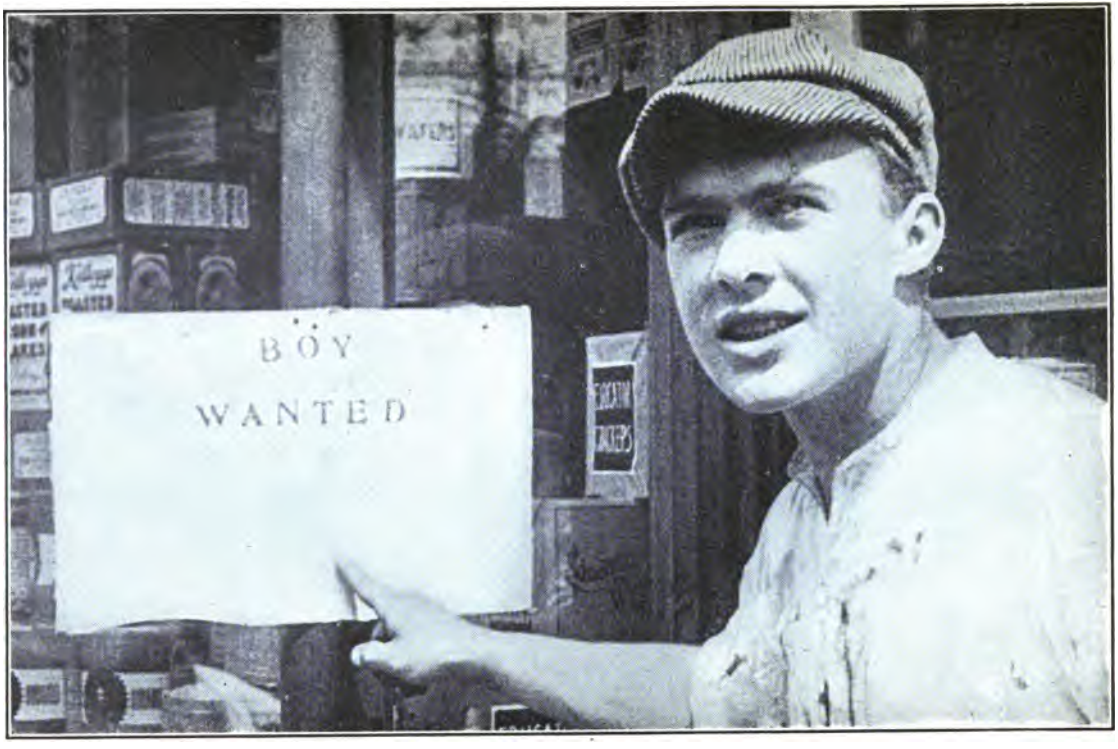
"There's one other little thing, and then I'll tell you the main thing I want to say—flash it, as you fellows would say. We have to be careful about talking. Stick your tongue out a little way between your teeth and say them."

"Them," said Tom.

"The first thing for you to do is to make a list of all the words you use that begin with th and say them that way. You know we have troop calls and patrol calls and all sorts of calls, and we've got to be able to make them just right—see?"

"Sure—yessir."

"Now you take that word you use so much—'ye-re.' 'Yes' is better because it's only got three letters and you can flash it quicker. So one of the first things to do is to make the school books work overtime (there's only two or three weeks more) and get all those words just right; *them, those, three*—because if you said 'tree' and meant 'three' it might throw everything endways. We have a lot to do with trees in the summertime, and you want to be able to say 'three' just right, for another reason.



OUTSIDE SCHMITT'S GROCERY THEY FOUND A "BOY WANTED" SIGN.

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"There are three parts to the Scout Oath and we don't want to get those three parts mixed with trees. So whenever you're thinking of the oath, say *three* and whenever you're thinking of going to Salmon River Grove, say tree."

The boy was much impressed.

"But, Tom, the immediate thing to do is to go down to Schmitt's Grocery and take down that sign he's got outside."

"I told Roy Blakeley I wouldn't take down no more signs."

"You can tell Roy you took this one down with me—just for a stunt."

Outside Schmitt's Grocery they found a "Boy Wanted" sign, and then Tom understood. He hesitated a little when Mr. Ellsworth went in, for his relations with Mr. Schmitt had not been altogether cordial.

"How'd do, Mr. Schmitt," said the scoutmaster breezily. "How's the Russian advance?"

"Dem Roosians vill gett all vot's coming to dem," said Mr. Schmitt.

"Yes? Well, how about this boy?"

"Vell, vot about him?"

"He wants to take down that sign out there."

"Och! I know dot poy!"

"No, you don't; this is a different fellow—a Boy Scout."

"Vell, if dis iss der kind of a poy scouts——"

"Now, look here, Mr. Schmitt, don't you say anything about the Boy Scouts. Who stopped your runaway horse for you last week?"

"I didn't say noddings about dem——"

"Well, a scout is a brother to every other scout, and if you say anything against one you say it against all."

He winked significantly at Mr. Schmitt. "Come back here, I want to speak to you," said he.

They retired to the rear of the store, where Mr. Schmitt leaned his arm affectionately over the big wheel of the coffee-grinder and listened, all attention.

Tom overheard the words, "fresh air," "Boys' Home," "something to do," "appeal to honor," "sense of responsibility," and more or less about woods and country and about a "boy to-day being a man to-morrow," and about "working with him," and other odds and ends which he did not understand.

"Vell, it's a goot ting, I'll say dot mooch," said Mr. Schmitt, as they returned to the front

of the store. "Dere is too mooch cities—dey don't got no chance."

"Tom," said Mr. Ellsworth, "I've been telling Mr. Schmitt about that signal work. (He was wondering what the light was.) And I've told him about your wanting to earn a little money before camping time. He's going to start you in on three dollars and a half a week, school-days after three and all day Saturdays and Saturday nights. He asked me if you could deliver goods and I told him there wasn't a boy in town who could "deliver the goods" like you. Remember the pack you've got to carry for the whole troop. If you fall down, you'll queer the troop—Roy Blakeley and all of us.

"Mr. Schmitt's a busy man and he has no time to think of what you were doing a few days ago, so don't you think about that either. You can't follow a trail looking backward—you have to keep your squinters ahead. Isn't that so, Mr. Schmitt?"

"You can'd look forwards vile you are going packwards," said Mr. Schmitt. "You come aroundt at dree o'clock, to-morrow."

"Now, Tom," said Mr. Ellsworth, as they left the store, "my idea is for you to stay at Mrs.

O'Connor's, and give her your money every week. Roy says he'd like to have you go up several nights a week and stay at Camp Solitaire, so I think maybe three dollars a week to Mrs. O'Connor will be all right. Then she'll save the other fifty cents for you and by the time we start for Salmon River you'll have enough, or pretty near enough, for a uniform.

"For instance, you might go up to Camp Solitaire every other night and eat plum-duff and eggs with Roy. He says they've got chickens enough up there to keep the camp going. He uses so many eggs, one way or another, I should think he'd ashamed to look a hen in the face. And remember about the colors coming down at sunset. Uncle Sam's a regular old maid about such things, you know. And don't forget page—what was it?"

"Tree—three hundred and seventy-five," said Tom.

"That'll tell you all about the flag. Then I want you to turn to page 28 in the Handbook and study our law. We have our own home-made laws same as everything else, plum-duff and fishing rods—all home-made."

Tom laughed.

"I'll want to know what you think of those laws. I think they're pretty good; Roy thinks they're great, but then Roy's half crazy——"

"No, he isn't."

"He doesn't know as much as he thinks he does," the scoutmaster came back.

"He knows all dem—them signs backwards."

"You'll beat him out at it," said the scoutmaster. "Anyway, he's going to post you about the sign and the salute, and that leaves only the knots. You take a squint at those knots in the Handbook. I can improve on two of them, but I won't tell you how. You've got to get the hang of four of them, and I want you to see if you can't do all this by Sunday afternoon. But remember, Mr. Schmitt comes first."

Mr. Ellsworth blew into Mrs. O'Connor's with the same breezy pleasantry that he had shown Mr. Schmitt, to the great edification and delight of Sadie McCarren. He created quite a sensation in Barrel Alley and Mrs. O'Connor, good woman that she was, fell in with his plan enthusiastically.

The next morning Tom was up at six, wrestling with the O'Connor clothes-line, and by half past seven he had mastered the reef-knot and the

weaver's knot, which latter he used to fasten two loose ends of the broken line for permanent use, and he wondered whether this by-product of his early morning practice might pass as a "good turn."

Before he went to school, Mrs. Beaman, a neighbor, came in and said that after long consultation with her husband she had decided to offer three dollars for the Slade possessions, and in the absence of Bill Slade, the estate was settled up in Tom's interest on that basis. So he went forth feeling he and John Temple were alike in at least one thing—they were both capitalists.

Mr. Ellsworth was somewhat of a stickler for form and organization, and it was a pleasant scene which took place the following Sunday afternoon under the big elm up at Camp Solitaire. The ceremony of investing a Tenderfoot was always held on a Sunday because he believed it made it more impressive, and whenever possible it was held out of doors.

The First Bridgeboro Troop was highly organized and all its ceremonies emphasized the patrol. The two patrols, the Ravens and the Silver Foxes (and later the Elks) participated in the

investing ceremony, but it was the affair particularly of the patrol into which the Tenderfoot was to enter, and this idea was worked out in the ceremony.

Each patrol stood grouped about its flag, and a little apart, near the national colors, stood Mr. Ellsworth and Worry Sage, Troop Scribe, armed with a book and fountain pen. Down near the signal pedestal was Roy's sister, Esther, in company with her mother and one or two servants from the house. Carl, the gardener, was there, too, to watch the ceremony.

Roy Blakeley, as sponsor for the new member, stepped forward with Tom.

"Whom have you here?" Mr. Ellsworth said, in accordance with their regular form.

"An applicant for membership in our Troop and a voice in our councils," answered Roy.

"Is he worthy to be a member of our Troop?"

"I come as his friend and his brother," said Roy, "and to certify that he is as desirable to us as we to him."

"Has he made satisfactory proof of the tests?"

"He has."

"And is he prepared to take the oath?"

"He is prepared."

"Raise your right hand in the Scout Salute," Mr. Ellsworth said to Tom.

Then Worry Sage stepped forward and repeated the oath, Tom following him, line by line:

On my honor I will do my best—

To do my duty to God and my country, and to obey the scout law;

To help other people at all times;

To keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.

"How say you? Is this applicant familiar with the law?" asked the scoutmaster.

"He is familiar with the law and finds it good."

"Let the law be read."

Worry Sage read the first law, which was the one Tom broke when he stole Mary Temple's ball.

"You find this law good?" asked the scoutmaster.

"Yes sir, I do."

Then Worry read the next one, "A Scout is loyal. He is loyal to all to whom loyalty is due; his scout leader, his home and parents and country."

"You find this law good?"

There was a slight pause.

"Do I have to obey that one?" said he. "Do I have ter be loyal ter *him?*"

Mr. Ellsworth stepped forward amid a tense silence and laid his hand on Tom's shoulder.

"I think you have been loyal to your mother already, Tom," he said in a low tone, "as for your father," he hesitated; "yes, I think you must be loyal to him too. There weren't any Boy Scouts when he was a boy, Tom. We must remember that."

"All right," said Tom.

"You find this law good?" asked the scoutmaster, resuming the ceremonial form.

"Yes—I do. I'll be—loyal."

The reading of the law completed, he stepped back with Roy to the Silver Fox emblem.

The Silver Fox patrol leader asked, "Do you promise to stand faithful to this emblem, and to these your brother scouts of the Silver Fox Patrol?"

And then, "Are you familiar with the patrol call which is the voice of the silver fox, and with the patrol sign, which is the head of the silver fox, and do you promise to use this call and this

sign and no other so that your name may be honorable in all the Troop, and among all troops?"

And Tom answered, "I promise."

Mr. Ellsworth pinned the Tenderfoot Badge on his breast.

Tom Slade of Barrel Alley had become a Scout. He could not see where the trail led, but that he had hit the right one he felt sure.

CHAPTER VIII

STUNG!

"Got the linen thread?"

"Right here in the tin cup."

"All right, put the tin cup in the pint measure and the pint measure in the coffee-pot; now put the coffee-put in the kettle and the kettle in the duffel-bag. Then put the duffel-bag in the corner."

"Where'll I put the corner?" laughed Tom.

"There we are," said Roy, "all ready before the Ravens have started to pack. They ought to be called the 'Snails.'"

They were up at Camp Solitaire, the whole patrol, and the standing of the duffel-bag in the corner of the tent was the last act of a busy day.

"I'll be sorry to see Camp Solitaire break up," said Tom. "We've had some good sport up here."

"There hasn't been much 'solitaire' to it lately," said Eddie Ingram.

"Well, down it comes in the morning," said

Roy. "What are we going to catch, the three-thirty?"

"I bet the Ravens won't be ready," said one of the boys.

"It would be just like them," observed another.

"And we'll have to wait for the five-fifteen."

Just then Esther Blakeley came running out from the house.

"I saw Walter Harris," said she, panting from running and excitement, "and he told me to tell you that if the Ravens aren't at the station not to wait for them but go right along on the three-thirty and they'll see you later at Salmon River Grove."

"What did I tell you!" laughed Roy. "Can you beat the Snail Patrol?"

"Hurrah for the Turtles!" shouted Westy.

"I wouldn't be surprised if they didn't show up till the next day."

"Or next week," said Tom.

The Ravens were not on hand for the three-thirty next day and the Silver Foxes went without them, bag and baggage.

"They're some rear guard, all right," said Roy.

"Bet they're still buying fishing-tackle," said Westy.

"The Also Ran Patrol," commented Dorry Benton.

"The Last Gasp Patrol," said another boy.

"The Tardy Turtles," ventured Tom.

"We'll have our tent up before they leave Bridgeboro—you see," said Roy. "Somebody ought to set a fire-cracker off underneath that patrol—they're hopeless."

Salmon River Grove was about an hour out on the train. Some of the wealthier of the Bridgeboro people had cottages there. The Bennetts had a pretty bungalow in the village and here, in a hammock on the wide veranda, Connover was wont to loll away the idle summer hours in cushioned ease, reading books about boys who dwelt in the heavens above and in the earth beneath and in the waters under the earth. They went down in submarines, these boys, and up in airships, and to the North Pole and the South Pole and the Desert of Sahara. They were all Boy Scouts and it was from these books that Mrs. Bennett gleaned her notions of scouting.

It was a dangerous season for Connover, for in the spring his fancy softly turned to thoughts

of scouting, but Mrs. Bennett stood guard against these perils with a tennis racquet and a bottle of cod liver oil and a backgammon board and an automatic piano. And so by hook or crook Connover was tided over the dangerous season, and allowed to read the *Dan Dreadnought Series* as a sort of compromise.

But the show place at Salmon River Grove was Five Oaks, the magnificent new estate of John Temple with its palatial rubble-stone residence, its garage and hot-houses and "No Trespassing" signs, of which latter he had the finest collection of any man in the state. The latest edition of these did not say "No Trespassing" at all, but simply, "Keep out." These signs stood about the newly graded lawns seeming to shake their fists at the curious who peered at the great turretted structure.

Mr. Blakeley, Roy's father, also owned an extensive tract of woods a little way from the village and here the First Bridgeboro Troop was monarch of all it surveyed from the day school closed until almost the day it opened; and here Mr. Ellsworth spent the happy days of a well-earned vacation, going into town occasionally as business demanded.

From Salmon River Grove Station the Silver Fox Patrol had to hike it out for about three miles, and when they hit Camp Ellsworth (as the boys insisted upon calling it) there was the Ravens' tent pitched under the trees, and the Ravens' flag flying, and the Ravens' fire crackling away, and the Ravens themselves gathered about it. On a tree was displayed a glaring sign done in charcoal, which read,

The Follow-Afters are cordially invited to dine with the Rapid Ravens. Supper is ready and

WAITING.

When Mr. Ellsworth came out from Bridgeboro at seven o'clock, he declined to be interviewed as to what he might know of this affair. But whatever he knew, it was evident that the whole plan was known in another quarter, for the very next day the "mail-hiker" (who was Dorry Benton) brought up from Salmon River Village a post card addressed to Roy, which read,

"MR. SMARTY:

"Perhaps you know by this time the cause of

my 'scout smile.' Do you still think Walter Harris is a turtle? ESTHER."

Scout-Pace Pee-wee got possession of this card, made an elaborate birch bark frame for it, and hung it up in the Ravens' tent, where it remained ostentatiously displayed until the bitter day of reckoning, which came not long after.

To Tom Slade the wretched, slum-stained boy whose whole poor program had been to call names and throw stones, the camp routine, the patrol rivalries and reprisals, the hikes, the stunts, the camp-fire yarns, the stalking and tracking, were like the designs in a kaleidoscope.

Observant persons noticed how he began to say "I saw" instead of "I seen"; "those" instead of "them," and how his speech improved in many other ways. This was largely in the interest of the signalling, about which he had come to be a perfect fiend. It sent him to the dictionary to find out how to spell words which were to be flashed or wigwagged; and from spelling them properly he came to pronounce them properly.

When he found that it was possible to tell a piece of oak from a piece of ash by smelling it, if the sense of smell were good, why, that was a

knock-out blow for cigarettes. He wasn't going to let the Ravens get away with that species of scouting proficiency.

Next to signalling work the thing that engrossed Tom's thoughts was tracking, which he was forever practicing and which he now looked to as the one remaining accomplishment which would advance him to the Second Class.

More than a month of scout life had passed for him and he was eligible in that particular; he was ready, though a trifle shaky, on the "first aid" business; as for signalling, he had but one rival and that was Roy; and he could jog along at scout pace with anyone except Pee-wee. He was prepared to chop his way into the Second Class with knife or hatchet, as per requirements; he could kindle a fire in the open and cook you a passable meal, though he would never be the equal of Roy as a chef.

He knew the points of the compass also, and there were but two things about which he was still in doubt. These were the tracking and the financial business. He felt that if he could do a good tracking stunt it might compensate for his lack in cooking proficiency and for his omission in another particular.

It was now the ambition of his life to be a Second Class Scout; he thought of it by day and dreamed of it by night, and he wrestled with a dogged persistence with those things in which he was not skillful because they were not in his line.

It was in the interest of this ambition that he joined Mr. Ellsworth one morning as the latter was starting out from camp on one of his "auto confabs," as the boys called his strolls, for on these he was wont to formulate new policies and schemes and, as a rule, he went alone.

"Come along, Tommy boy," said he cheerily. "Got something you want to say?"

"Yes, sir. I think I can do that tracking stunt in Paragraph Four an' if I do an' make it a good one, I was wondering if—I s'pose—would you—would you think those potatoes I cooked yesterday were all right?"

"Very fair, Tommy."

"Would it pass for Test Eight?"

"Oh, I think maybe so; we all have our specialties, Tom."

"I'm a little shaky on first aid."

"I guess you can get away with that all right."

"Well then," said Tom, "there's only one thing to prevent—that is, if I do the tracking stunt."

"Yes? What's that?"

"It's about the money."

"So?"

"Yes, sir; I've got that five dollars Mr. Schmitt gave me for the extra work when he opened the branch store."

"Where've you got that, Tom?"

"I've got it 'round my neck on a strong cord. I made a bow line knot. It's in my membership book to keep it clean."

It was a new bill and he had always kept it clean.

"The rule says it must be in the bank—one dollar anyway. But I don't want to break it. One day I was going to ask Roy to give me five ones for it and then I decided not to. I like one bill better, don't you?"

"Yes, I don't know but what I do, Tom," said Mr. Ellsworth, smiling.

"Did I tell you it was a new one?"

"No."

"Well, 'tis."

"All right, Tommy. Don't you worry about that. Just keep the bow line knot good and tight and think of potatoes and bandages and if you can make that tracking stunt something special

so as to just knock the Commissioner off his feet, I guess it'll land you in the Second Class. One thing has to make up for another, you know. I've got to stand guard because if I didn't you fellows would be all waltzing scout-pace into the Second Class. But don't worry about financial matters—that's what's turning Mr. Temple's hair gray. When I go into town I'll put that five-spot in the bank for you, hey?"

"Then if I took it out of the bank would it be the same bill?"

"No, it would be a different one."

"But would it be a new one?"

"If you wanted a new one they'd give you a new one. Now you hike it back to camp and tell Worry there are to be no leaves of absence tonight on account of camp-fire yarns, and to post a notice. Tell him to make duplicate prints of the chipmunk Eddie stalked and paste one in the Troop Book. I've got a call to make up toward the village."

Tom made him the full salute and started back That night he dreamed that the "Be Prepared" scroll was pinned upon him and that he was a Silver Fox Scout of the Second Class, having passed with much distinction.

Mr. Ellsworth had designs on the Bennett bungalow and he blew into the porch like a refreshing breeze that sultry morning.

"Hello, Connie, old boy," he called to the youth in the hammock. "How's the state of your constitution?"

"I've got a little touch of rheumatism," said Connover.

"Yes?" said the scoutmaster. "What right have *you* got to have rheumatism? I thought John Temple had a controlling interest in all the rheumatism around here."

"It gets me in the arm," said Connover.

"So? That's too bad. May I lift these books off the chair, Connie?"

"Surely—sit down. Just push them on the floor."

"Regular Carnegie Library, eh? What are they all about, Con?"

Connover quite welcomed the interruption for Mr. Ellsworth's offhand cordiality was nothing less than contagious. He fell immediately and completely into the spirit of whatever was on the boards.

" 'Bout the Boy Scouts."

"No—really?" said Mr. Ellsworth, running

through one of the volumes amusedly. "Who's this fellow, Dan Dreadnought?"

"He's lieutenant of the Eureka Patrol."

"So? I thought maybe he was a battleship from his name. And what does Dan do to pass the time?"

"This one I'm reading now," said Connover, "is the *Eureka Patrol in the Fiji Islands; Dan stabs two natives.*"

"Get out! Does he really?"

"And the captain of the squad——"

"What squad?"

"Of Boy Scouts—the captain is taken prisoner by the cannibals——"

"You don't say! How many of these books are there, Connie?"

"Twenty-seven—all one series."

"Well, Dan's some boy, isn't he? How would *you* like to be a scout, Connie?"

"My mother wouldn't let me have a musket."

"They all have muskets, do they?"

At this point Mrs. Bennett appeared and greeted the scoutmaster cordially. She could never find it in her heart to dislike Mr. Ellsworth.

"How'd do, Mrs. Bennett."

"Good morning, Mr. Ellsworth," she said, and

added smilingly, "I hope you are not trying to contaminate Connover again."

"Me? Oh, dear, no! A fellow who can witness the murder of two innocent South Sea natives isn't in much danger from *me!*"

But Mrs. Bennett failed to see the point.

"I tell Connover," said Mrs. Bennett, "that if it must be 'scouts' and 'wild west' it is better in the books than in real life."

"Well, that's a matter of taste, Mrs. Bennett. You can have Dan What's-his-name up here, if you want to, but I wouldn't allow him near my camp. No siree!"

"Yet he's a scout boy," said Mrs. Bennett triumphantly.

"From all I can see he's a silly blackguard. Why, Mrs. Bennett," added the scoutmaster pleasantly, "you've hit the wrong trail——"

"I've what?"

"Hit the wrong trail. We don't have 'Eureka' Patrols or captains or lieutenants or squads or muskets. This book has got no more to do with real scouting than it has with a Sunday School picnic. I tell you what, Mrs. Bennett, I just came up out of the woods, and I tell you it's a shame that good trees should be cut down to get wood-

pulp to make paper on which to print such stuff as this! It's a waste of good trees!"

"I have always done everything for Connover——" began Mrs. Bennett.

"Well, do one thing more for him and let him come and join the scouts—the real scouts. That's what I wanted to see you about. I'm going to work up a new patrol, the Elks. Like that name, Connie?"

"Yes, sir."

"And I want Connie in the Elks."

"It's quite out of the question, Mr. Ellsworth. I am willing that he should read about them, but there it must end. We have always done everything for Connover. I have never stinted him in the matter of wholesome pleasure of any kind."

"You don't call murder wholesome pleasure, do you?"

"Here he is under my eye. There is no use arguing the matter. I have no thought but of Connie's welfare and happiness, but I am not willing that he should dress up like Mrs. Blakeley's boy—a perfect *sight*—his clothes *redolent* of smoke—and play with fire and sleep in a draught."

"There aren't any draughts outdoors, Mrs. Bennett."

"There's the damp air. Oh, it's quite out of the question!"

"Don't you think those O'Connor boys would be better out here?"

"I think a boy is better in his home, where his mother is. I have done everything for Connover —everything, and he is ready to do this much for me. Aren't you, dearie?"

As Mr. Ellsworth walked back to camp through the silent woods, he was puzzled at the reasoning of the fond mother who thought that *Dan Dreadnought* was a better companion for her son than Roy Blakeley.

CHAPTER IX

"BURGLARS"

On one of their morning rambles, Mrs. Temple and Mary wandered to an unusual distance from home, and as the sun mounted higher Mrs. Temple felt greatly fatigued. Mary looked about for a spot where her mother might sit down and rest, but was startled by a slight sound and ran back just as Mrs. Temple sank fainting against a tree.

Greatly frightened, the girl looked wildly around for assistance, but there was no house nor sign of life in sight. Not knowing what to do she ran along the road a little way, calling aloud, when suddenly she heard a sound. Pausing to listen she distinctly heard again what sounded like a bugle call, and turning in the direction from which it seemed to come she ran through the woods until she came, breathless, to the camp of the Bridgeboro Scouts.

It happened that the Silver Foxes were that

morning practising in first aid, and as soon as Mr. Ellsworth could gather from the frightened girl that her mother was in real need, he rushed "Doc" Carson, the first-aid boy, and Roy off to the rescue, instructing the other members of the patrol to follow scout pace.

Water was brought and Mrs. Temple quickly revived. Her head had been slightly cut as she fell, and this Carson bandaged skilfully. She was still too weak to walk, however, and the boys improvised a litter in which she was carefully borne back to camp, Mary walking at her side.

The Ravens, meanwhile, under Mr. Ellsworth's direction, had prepared a sort of couch of fir boughs. Onto this they helped Mrs. Temple and the scoutmaster sat down beside her.

Perhaps it was not entirely by chance that he had instructed the two patrols to go through their signalling maneuvers at a little distance, so that they should not disturb the invalid, but yet in full view and near enough so that she might follow the course of the proceedings if she cared to. Mary had a thousand questions to ask as to the meaning of the various signals, and the kind scoutmaster answered them all patiently, finally summoning Eddie Ingram to show her about the

camp and explain all its mysteries. Then, seeing that Mrs. Temple showed some interest in the maneuvers, the guileful Mr. Ellsworth proceeded to explain their practical value and the good uses to which the scout "stunts" were often put, tactfully pointing out the change that had taken place in Tom Slade, who at this moment was bashfully showing Mary how to blow whistle signals on a small bottle.

Mrs. Temple, however, showed but a courteous interest, and feeling that her husband would be alarmed at her long absence she called to Mary and insisted upon returning home immediately, despite Mr. Ellsworth's urgent invitation that she stay and share the scouts' luncheon.

The Silver Fox patrol was ordered to escort the ladies home, and with this ample bodyguard they returned to Five Oaks, the boys laughingly contesting for the honor of walking with Miss Mary—all save Tom, who lingered somewhat shamefacedly in the rear.

As they walked up the gravel path through the spacious lawn, it was evident that something was wrong. One of the servants was in the *porte-cochère,* wringing her hands, and the stoical Japanese valet stood near her, calm and unsmiling.

The unusual sight of the uniformed scouts did not seem to ruffle him at all.

Carl, the gardener, was craning his neck to look up and down the road from the window of the library, a room which he would never have dared to enter save on a very urgent matter.

"Where is Mr. Temple?" Mrs. Temple asked. "I have had quite an adventure."

"Yes'm—he went after you, ma'am—with the runabout. He thought you was lost and he took on so—not knowing which way to go at all—and he sent James the other way to look for you —an' there was burglars——"

"What?"

"There was someone entered the house an' has gone away an' all Miss Mary's things out of her bureau is all over the bed——"

The story of the afternoon's events was quickly extracted from the excited servant, prompted by Carl and the Jap. Mr. Temple, having grown anxious about the prolonged absence of his wife and daughter, had started out in the runabout in quest of them. The butler had been sent in another direction and shortly thereafter one of the maids had heard footsteps on the floor above. Thinking that Mrs. Temple must have returned,

she went upstairs when, to her terror, a frightful-looking man brushed past her and went down the back stairs. She had screamed, and Carl and Kio had both come to her, but a search of the house and grounds had not discovered the burglar. The screen in the pantry window was ripped away, and Kio volunteered the suggestion that the "honorable burglar gentleman" had made his exit through it.

A systematic search of all the rooms by Mrs. Temple and the patrol revealed no loss or evidence of ransacking except that in Mary's room the contents of the top bureau drawer were disheveled and some trinkets and an upset box lay upon the bed.

"It looked as if they were interrupted," said Roy.

"They took my class pin," said Mary, running over the things. "Oh, isn't that a shame! I don't care what else they took—that's the *only thing I care about!* Oh, I think they were too mean for anything! It was my class pin!" She was crying a little.

"It wasn't worth very much, dear," said her mother.

"It isn't that," said the girl; "you don't under-

stand. I thought as much of it as you boys do of those badges."

"I understand," said Westy.

"Sure, we understand—don't we, Tom?" said Roy.

Tom said nothing his eyes were fixed on the girlish trinkets which lay in confusion on the bed.

"I think it was too mean of them," Mary said. "I'd ask papa to give them my ruby out of his safe if they'd only bring *that* back!"

"Where did Tom go?" asked Westy, noticing that Tom had left the room.

"I guess maybe he's afraid he might meet Mr. Temple," whispered Dorry Benton. "I don't believe he wants to see him, and I don't blame him."

Tom had gone downstairs and around the house to the pantry window. Nothing was farther from his thoughts than John Temple, but in those few minutes upstairs something had been said which recalled to his mind something else which had been said in the same half-dcubtful, half-trustful voice, many weeks before. *"Will you promise to toss it back?"* And out of the past he heard a rough, sneering voice answer, *"Sure, didn' I tell yer?"* The words, *"If they'd only bring that back,"* seemed almost to counter-

feit that haunting voice out of the past, and they stung Tom Slade like a white-hot coal.

The rubber ball, which had been the subject of the half-pleading question, had gone the way of most rubber balls, and the memory of the episode would have gone the way of all such memories in the hoodlum mind, except that something had happened to Tom Slade since then. He was familiar now with Paragraph 1, Scout Law, and was presently to show that he had pondered on other paragraphs of that law as well.

Outside the pantry window was a nail keg and on this Tom sat down. It was in a jog formed by an angle in the back of the house, and there was not much danger of being seen from any of the rear ground floor windows, for these were all of heavy cathedral glass. The ground beneath them was littered with nails and shavings; a scrap or two of colored glass and some little bars of lead lay strewn about where the men had been working.

Presently he heard voices and guessed that his companions were leaving. Then he heard the honk of an auto horn and caught a fleeting glimpse of a gray car rolling up the private way toward the *porte-cochère*. He heard other voices,

MRS. TEMPLE WAS TOO WEAK TO WALK AND THE BOYS IMPROVISED A LITTER FOR HER.

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the excited greetings of Mrs. Temple and Mary, and the sonorous and authoritative tones of John Temple.

For a moment he forgot what he had come out here for, as he realized that it would be difficult to leave without being seen. His hatred of John Temple had modified somewhat since he had become a scout, and had now given place to a feeling of awe for the man who could own a place of such magnificence as Five Oaks. Never before had Tom been in such a house. He had supposed that Roy's beautiful home was about the most luxurious abode imaginable. He realized now that he was stranded in this despotic kingdom with "No Trespassing" signs all about glaring at him like sentinels.

Tom had acquired many of the scout virtues and his progress in the arts (save in one or two which he could not master) had been exceptional. But he had still to acquire that self-confidence and self-possession which are the invariable result of good breeding. He had not felt at home in the house and though his conscience was perfectly clear, he was ill at ease now.

Presently he heard voices again; he saw the car leave with the chauffeur alone, and heard the

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smothered ringing of the telephone bell in the house.

These evidences of the power of wealth hit his boyish imagination hard, and for a minute John Temple seemed like a hero. He could despatch a car to Bridgeboro, another to Keensburgh; he could call up every police station in the state and offer rewards which would cause sheriffs and constables to sit up and take notice. He could pay ten thousand dollars for the capture of the man who had stolen that little class pin. John Temple might be an old grouch, but he was a wonderful man!

Then the words came rushing into Tom's head again, *Will you promise to toss it back?* and those other words, *If they would only bring it back!*

Then he remembered what he had come out here for, and it seemed very silly and futile alongside the approved methods which were being followed within. While he knew the Scout Handbook did not lie, just the same he hesitated to give this deducing and tracking business a practical test. Then, suddenly, there came to his mind the words Mr. Ellsworth was so fond of repeating to the troop, *He who has eyes to see, let him see.*

CHAPTER X

TOM TURNS DETECTIVE

As Tom rose he saw that the fresh paint on the pantry window ledge had been smeared. Then he looked at the ground. Below the window was a long smooth mark on the soil. "The fellow had jumped from that window," said he, "slid when he touched the groun'." He stopped, but not to pick up a rock. Then he went down on his hands and knees, with never a thought of those treasured khaki trousers, and while the telephone bell rang and rang again in the house he read the writing which is written all over the vast, open page of nature for those who have eyes and know how to see.

He was very much engrossed now; he forgot everything. He was a scout of the scouts, and he screwed up his face and studied the ground as a scholar pores over his books.

"Huh," said he, "his shoes need soling, that's one sure thing."

He examined with care a little thin crooked indentation in the soil, as if a petrified angleworm had been pushed into the hard earth.

"Huh," said he, "I hope he kicked into it hard enough so it stays there."

He was satisfied that the fugitive's shoe was worn in the sole so that the outer layer, worn thin and flopping loose, had slid onto one of the little malleable leaden bars used in the cathedral-glass windows. This had evidently pushed its way into the tattered sole, bent a little from the impact, and lodged securely. Either the fugitive did not feel it, or did not care to pause and remove it. It made a mark as plain as Tom's patrol sign.

He cast one apprehensive look at the open windows of the upper floor and, taking a chance, made a bold dash across the rear lawn, where he thought he could discern footprints in the newly-sprouting grass. Several hundred feet away was the boundary fence and here the correctness of his direction was confirmed by a painty smooch on the top rail where the fugitive had climbed over.

Tom leaped across the fence and, as usual, after any vigorous move, he felt instinctively to

see if his precious five-dollar bill was safe. He lived in continual dread of losing it. He paused a minute scrutinizing the small crooked marks left by the leaden bar. Then he thought of something which added fresh zest to his thus far successful search. It was provision four of the Second Class Scout tests:

Track half a mile in twenty-five minutes,
or, ...

"If I do that," said he, looking at his dollar watch, "it'll land me in the Second Class with a rush, and if I should get the pin for her that would knock the Commissioner off his feet, all right. Here's my tracking stunt mapped out for me. I never claimed I could cook. Oh, cracky, here's my chance!"

He got the word "Cracky" from Roy.

As he turned and cast a last look toward the house someone (a woman, he thought) seemed to be waving her arm from one of the upper casements. He could not make up his mind whether she was beckoning to him or only scrubbing the window. Then he entered the woods where the ground was sparsely covered with pine-needles.

He had to stoop and search for the guiding mark and there were places where for thirty or forty feet at a stretch it was not visible, but the tumbled appearance of the pine-needle carpet showed where someone had recently passed. Then the marks took him into a beaten way and he jogged along with hope mounting high.

He had tracked for more than twenty-five minutes and a very skillful tracking it had been, entirely independent of its possible result. So far as the tracking requirement was concerned he had fulfilled that in good measure, and the possible danger in connection with it would commend it strongly to the Scout Commissioner. Moreover, the deductive work which preceded the tracking and the chivalrous motive would surely make up for any lack in first aid and cooking. "One thing has to make up for another," he thought, recalling Mr. Ellsworth's words.

He was breathing hard, partly from a nervous fear as to what he should do if he succeeded in overtaking the robber, and his little celluloid membership booklet with the precious bill in it, flapped against his chest as he hurried on. "I'll be in the Second Class before Pee-wee," he thought.

Suddenly he came to a dead stop as he saw a

figure sitting against the trunk of a tree a couple of hundred feet away. The tree trunk was between himself and the man and about all he could see was two knees drawn up.

Now was the time for discretion. Tom was a husky enough boy; he seemed much larger since he had acquired the scout habit of standing straight, but he was not armed and he felt certain that the stranger was.

"I wish I had Roy's moccasins," he thought.

He retreated behind a tree himself and quietly removed his shoes. The position of the stranger was favorable for a stealthy approach and Tom advanced cautiously. A flask lay beside the man and he was just taking a measure of encouragement in the prospect of the man's being asleep when the drawn-up knees went down with a sudden start and the figure rose spasmodically, reeled slightly and clutched the tree.

Tom stepped back a pace, staring, for it was the face of Bill Slade which was leering, half stupidly, at him.

"Stay—stay where you are," said Tom, his voice tense with fear and astonishment, as his father made a step toward him. "I—I tracked you—stay where you are—I—didn' know who

I wuz trackin'—I didn'. Don't you come no nearer. I—I wouldn' do yer no hurt—I wouldn'."

It was curious how in his dismay and agitation he fell into the old hoodlum phraseology and spoke to his father just as he used to do when the greasy, rickety dining-table was between them.

The elder Slade was a pathetic spectacle. He had gone down quite as fast as his son had gone up. He leered at the boy with red and heavy eyes out of a face which had not been shaved in many a day. His cheek bones protruded conspicuously. The coat which at the time of Mrs. Slade's funeral had been black and which Tom remembered as a sort of grayish brown, was now the color of newly rusted iron. His shoe, which had turned traitor to him and whispered the direction of his flight to the trailing scout, was tied with a piece of cord. He was thin, even emaciated, and there was a little twitch in his eye which grotesquely counterfeited a wink, and which jarred Tom strangely. He did not know whether it was his lately-acquired habit of observation which made him notice this or whether it was a new warning from Mother Nature to his father. But Tom was not afraid of a man whose eye twitched

like that. He stood as firm as Roy Blakeley had stood that night of his first meeting with him.

That is what it means to be a scout for two months.

"Yer—a—a one o' them soldier lads, hey, Tommy?" said his father unsteadily.

"You stay there," said Tom. "Yer seen what I d-did ter de marshal. I'm stronger now than I wuz then, but I'm—I'm gon'er be loyal."

"Yer one o' them soldier fellers, hey?"

"I'm a scout of the Second Class," said Tom with a tremor in his voice: "or I would be if 'twasn't for you. I—I can't tell 'em the trackin' I done *now*. I gotter obey the law."

"Yer wouldn' squeal on yer father, would yer, Tommy?" said Slade, advancing with a suggestion of menace. "I wouldn' want ter choke yer."

Tom received this half-sneeringly, half-pityingly. He felt that he could have stuck out his finger and pushed his father over with it, so strong was he.

"Gimme the pin yer took," he said. "I don't care about nothin' else—but gimme the pin yer took."

"What pin?" grumbled Slade.

"You know what pin."

"Yer think I'd steal?" his father menaced.

"I *know* yer did an' I want that pin."

For a minute the elder Slade glared at his son with a look of fury. He made a start toward him and Tom stood just as Roy had stood, without a stir.

"Yer'd call me a thief, would yer—yer——"

"I was as bad myself once," said Tom, pitying him. "I swiped her ball. Gimme the pin."

" 'Taint wuth nothin'," he said.

"Gimme it."

Slade made an exploration of his pockets as if he could not imagine where such a thing could be. Then he looked at Tom as if reconsidering the wisdom of an assault; then off through the woods as if to determine the chance for a quick "get away."

"Yer wouldn' tell nobuddy yer met me," he whined.

"No, I'll *never* tell—gimme the pin."

"I didn' hev nothin' to eat fer two days, Tommy, an' I've got me cramps bad."

The same old cramps which had furnished the excuse for many an idle day! Tom knew those cramps too well to be affected by them, but he saw, too, that his father was a spent man; and

he thought of what Mr. Ellsworth had said, "There wasn't any First Bridgeboro Troop when he was a boy, Tom."

"I wouldn' never tell I seen yer," he said. "I wouldn' never—*ever* tell. It's my blame that we wuz put out o' Barrel Alley. It was you—it was you took me—to the—circus."

He remembered that one happy afternoon which he had once, long ago, enjoyed at his father's hands.

"An' I know yer wuz hungry or you wouldn' go in there in the daytime—'cause you'd be a fool to do it. I'm not cryin' 'cause I'm—a-scared—I don't get scared so easy—now."

Fumbling at his brown scout shirt he brought forth on its string the folding membership card of the Boy Scouts of America, attached to which was Tom's precious crisp five-dollar bill in a little bag.

"Gimme the pin," said he. "Yer kin say yer sold it fer five dollars—like," he choked.

"Is this it?" asked Slade, bringing it forth as if by accident, and knowing perfectly well that it was.

"Here," said Tom, handing him the bill. "It ain't only becuz yer give me the pin, but becuz

yer hungry and becuz—yer took me ter the circus."

It was strange how that one thing his father had done for him kept recurring to the boy now.

"Yer better get away," he warned. "Old John sent automobiles out and telephoned a lot. Don't —don't lose it," he added, realizing the large amount of the money. "If yer tied it 'round yer neck it 'ud be safer."

He stood just where he was as his father reeled away, watching him a little wistfully and doubtful as to whether he was sufficiently impressed with the sum he was carrying to be careful of it.

"It 'ud be safer if you tied it 'round yer neck," he repeated as his father passed among the trees with that sideways gait and half-limp which bespeaks a prideless and broken character.

"I'll never tell 'em of the tracking I do—did," he said, "so I won't pass on that; but even if I did I couldn't pass, 'cause I haven't got the money to put in the bank—now."

He had lost his great fortune and his cherished dream in one fell swoop.

And this was the triumph of his tracking.

CHAPTER XI

R-R-R-EVENGE

TOM SLADE had not the moral courage to crown his splendid triumph by going straightway and giving the pin to Mary Temple. He could not overcome his fear of John Temple and the awe of the palatial residence. You see, he had not the legacy of refined breeding to draw upon. The Scout movement had taken a big contract in the making of Tom Slade, but Mr. Ellsworth (good sport that he was) was never daunted. Tom did not know how to go alone up to the luxurious veranda at Five Oaks, ring the bell, face that stoical Japanese, ask to see the pretty, beautifully-dressed girl, and restore her pin to her. He could have done it without revealing the identity of the fugitive, but he did not know how to do it; he would not ask Roy to come to his assistance, and he missed the best fruits of his triumph.

So he went back to camp (scout pace, for it was

getting late), his empty membership booklet flapping against his chest as he ran.

It was fortunate for his disturbed and rather sullen state of mind that an unusual diversion was on the boards at camp. The Ravens' tent was quite deserted; Mr. Ellsworth was in his own tent, busily writing, and he called out cordially, "Hello, Tommy," as Tom passed on to the Silver Foxes' tent.

Within Roy was standing on a box holding forth to the entire patrol, and he was in that mood which never failed to fascinate Tom.

"Sit down; you get two slaps on the wrist for being late," said he. This was the only reference he or any of them made to Tom's disappearance at Five Oaks. A scout is tactful.

"I don't see any seat," Tom said.

"Get up and give Tom a seat," ordered Roy.

"*I* wouldn't get up and give President Wilson a seat," announced Eddie Ingram.

"Not me," laughed Dorry Benton, "I stalked for six miles to-day."

"Get up and give Mr. Thomas Slade a seat, somebody," shouted Roy.

"Keep still, you'll wake the baby," said Westy.

"You wouldn't catch me getting up to give

George Washington a seat," said Bert Collins, "not after *that* hike."

"I'll make them get up," said Roy, fumbling in his pocket.

"Yes, you will—*not,*" said Westy.

"Look at Eddie, he's half asleep," said Dorry.

"Wake up, Ed," shouted Roy. "It's time to take your sleeping powder.

"I wouldn't get up if you set a firecracker off under me, that's how tired I am," mumbled Eddie.

"I'll make them get up," Roy whispered, winking at Tom.

He pulled out his trusty harmonica and began to play the national air. Tom could not help laughing to see how they all rose.

"Now's your chance, sit down, Tom," said Roy. "The Pied Piper of What's-his-name hasn't got anything on me! The object of the puzzle, ladies and gentlemen," he continued.

"Hear! Hear!"

"Go to it. You're doing fine!"

"The object of the puzzle," said Roy, rolling up his sleeves as if he intended to do the puzzle then and there, "the object of the puzzle is to get inside the Ravens' tent without entering it. Will some gentleman in the audience kindly loan me a

high hat and a ten-dollar gold piece? No? Evidently no gentleman in the audience."

"Cut it out," said Westy. "They'll be back in an hour. What are we going to do?"

"We are not going to do anything until the silent hour of midnight," said Roy. "Then we are going to make reprisals."

"How do you make those?" called Westy.

"That's some word, all right," said Ed.

"I tracked that all the way through the Standard Dictionary," said Roy.

"How about Mr. Ellsworth?"

"He has announced his policy of strict neutrality," said Roy. "The field is ours! The obnoxious post-card will be ours if you, brave scouts, will do your part! For one month now has that obnoxious post-card hung in the Ravens' tent. For one month has Pee-wee Harris smiled his smile and gone unshaved—I mean unscathed. Shall this go on?"

"No! No!"

"Shall it be said that the Silver Foxes are not Sterling silver but only German silver?"

"Never!"

"Shall the silver of the Silver Foxes be tarnished by that slanderous card?"

"Never!"

"They have called us the 'Follow Afters'—they have said that we are nothing but 'Silver *Polish*'"!

"We'll rub it into them," shouted Westy.

"They have taken cowardly refuge in the troop rule that no Silver Fox shall enter their tent except on invitation, and this insertion——"

"You mean aspersion."

"Glares forth from the upright of their sordid lair——"

" 'Sordid lair' is good!"

"No extra charge," said Roy, "until the worm has turned. If we cannot enter their tent then we must take down their tent, remove the card, and put the tent up again."

"Oh, joy!" said Ed.

"And it must not be done sneakingly in their absence, but to the soft music of their snoring. The enterprise is beset with many dangers. Those who are not willing to venture (as What-do-you-call-him said when he stormed Fort Something-or-other) may stay behind!"

Before camp-fire yarns, an elaborate card was prepared in the privacy of the Silver Foxes' tent in Roy's characteristically glaring style, on which appeared the single word, STUNG!

The night for this bold deed had been well chosen. The Ravens had been stalking all day and at camp fire Tom listened wistfully to the account of the day's most notable stunt which was Pee-wee's tracking of a muskrat more than half a mile within the required twenty-five minutes of the Second Class provision.

"Pee-wee'll be the first to jump out of the Tenderfoot Class this summer," said Mr. Ellsworth, as he poked the crackling fire. "You Silver Foxes will have to get busy." He looked pleasantly at Tom. "Hey, Tommy?"

"I was wondering," said Roy, as he stretched himself on the ground close to the cheerful blaze, "if we couldn't work in something special for next Wednesday—it's troop birthday. We'll be two years old."

"That's right, so it is," said Artie Van Arlen, Raven. "I'm a charter member; the Silver Foxes weren't even heard of or thought of at that time."

"No, they're a lot of upstarts," said Doc. Carson, the first-aid boy. "You'd think to hear them talk that they started before National Headquarters did. I remember when this troop was a one-ring circus: just us Ravens, and we had some good

times too. I had my first-aid badge before those triple-plated Silver Foxes were born!"

"They have no traditions," said the Ravens' patrol leader.

"They're an up-to-date patrol, though," said Roy. "The Ravens are passé—like the old Handbook. That kind of patrol was all right when the thing first started; the Silver Foxes are a last year's model."

"Well," laughed Mr. Ellsworth, raking up the fire and drawing his grocery-box seat closer, "maybe the Silver Foxes will be ancient history soon. I'm thinking of a new pack of upstarts for you foxes to make fun of."

"You haven't made another flank move on Connie Bennett, have you?" laughed Roy. They were all familiar with Mr. Ellsworth's dream of another patrol.

"Connie rests his head on a pine cushion and imagines he's a Boy Scout," said Artie.

"He blows the dust off a *Dan Dreadnought* book and imagines it's the wind howling through the forest," said Westy.

"He runs the tennis-marker over the lawn and thinks he's tracking," said Pee-wee.

"No, not as bad as that, boys," laughed the

scoutmaster. "Between you and me and the camp fire, I suspect Connie's got the bug."

"Haven't given up hope yet?" said Roy.

"Never say die," answered Mr. Ellsworth, good-naturedly.

Once, twice, thrice had he made a daring assault on the Bennett stronghold and once, twice, thrice had he been gallantly repulsed by the Bennett right wing, which was Mrs. Bennett. He had planted the Bennett veranda with mines in the form of *Boys' Life* and *Scouting,* but all to no avail. Yet his hopeful spirit in regard to the visionary Elk Patrol was almost pathetic.

The tent of the venerable Raven patrol was pitched under a spreading tree and they retired with their proud and ancient traditions, blissfully unaware of the startling liberty which was to be taken with their historic dignity by those upstart Silver Foxes. Mr. Ellsworth, with a commendable application of his policy of strict neutrality, retired to his own tent to dream of the new patrol.

Never in the history of the troop had a Silver Fox trespassed unknown into the ancient privacy of the Ravens, and never had a Raven condescended to enter the Silver Fox stronghold save

honorably and by invitation. They knew the Silver Foxes for a sportive crew pervaded by the inventive spirit of Roy Blakeley, but they had no fear of any violation of scout honor and the obnoxious card hung ostentatiously on the central upright of their tent.

In the still hour of midnight the enterprising Silver Foxes emerged in spectral silence from their lair and the battle-cry (or rather, whisper) was "Revenge," pronounced by Roy as if it had a dozen rattling R's at the beginning of it. Every boy was keyed to the highest pitch of excitement.

The Ravens' tent was a makeshift affair of their own manufacture and when its sides were not up it was more of a pavilion than a tent: the Ravens believed in fresh air. There were two forked uprights and across these was laid the ridgepole. The canvas was spread over this and drawn diagonally toward the ground on either side. There were front and back and sides for stormy weather but they were seldom in requisition.

The program, discussed and settled beforehand, was carried out in scout silence, which is about thirty-three and one-third per cent greater than the regular market silence. Tom and Eddie

Ingram, being the tallest of the foxes, stationed themselves at either upright, the other members of the patrol lining up along the sides where they loosened the ropes from the pegs. Then Tom and Ed lifted the ridgepole, the scouts along the sides held the canvas high, and the entire patrol moved uniformly and in absolute silence. The tent, intact, was moved from over the sleeping Ravens as the magic carpet of the *Arabian Nights* was moved. It was a very neat little piece of work and showed with what precision the patrol could act in concert. Thanks partly to their strenuous day of stalking, never a Raven stirred except Doc. Carson, who startled them by turning over.

In the centre of the Ravens' tent a sapling had been planted, its branches cut away to within several inches of its trunk, so that it made a very passable clothes-tree. This still stood, like a ghostly sentinel, among the slumbering Ravens, laden with their clothes and paraphernalia. The sudden and radical transformation of the scene was quite grotesque and the unsheltered household gods of the Ravens looked ludicrous enough as they lay about in homelike disposition with nothing above them but the stars.

"Great!" whispered Roy, gleefully.

Eddie Ingram laid his end of the ridgepole on the ground and stealing cautiously over among the sleeping Ravens, removed the post card from the sapling and put the other card in its place. Then, stealing back to where the others were waiting, he resumed his end of the pole. This was restored to its place in the forked uprights, the ropes were fastened to the pegs along either side and the Silver Foxes bore Esther Blakeley's memento of their own disgrace triumphantly to their stronghold.

"Can you beat it?" said Roy, releasing himself with a sense of refreshment from the imposition of silence.

"A scout is stealthy," remarked Westy.

In the morning Pee-wee sauntered over and paused outside the Silver Foxes' tent, not saying a word, though.

"Well," said Roy, "what can we do for you?"

"I see you've got the card," said Pee-wee.

"Yes," said Westy, pulling on his blouse. "We're going to frame it and send it to National Headquarters, too, for an exhibition of scout stealth and silence."

"I suppose you think we walked in and took it,"

said Roy, adjusting his belt. "We didn't. We never entered your tent. A scout is honorable."

"No," said Pee-wee, "you took the tent down and put it up wrong end to. A scout is observant. Are we going fishing to-day?"

CHAPTER XII

"UP AGAINST IT FOR FAIR"

WHEN the telegraph and the telephone and the speeding autos and the bullying of the hapless village constable failed to reveal any clue to the burglar at Five Oaks, John Temple proceeded to pooh-pooh the whole business and say that there had never been any burglar, but that in all probability the maid had been exploring Mary's trinkets just as Mrs. Temple returned and that the "frightful-looking man" whom she had met on the stairs was a myth.

It was then that the maid, groping for any straw in her extremity, said that a boy in khaki had darted out from the pantry and across the private rear lawn into the woods beyond while she stood at the window.

If she had stuck to the plain truth and not permitted Mr. Temple to beat her down as to the man she actually did see on the stairs, a great deal of suffering might have been saved. But the

loss of only one trinket, and that one of small intrinsic value, seemed to lend color to the theory that it was the work of a boy rather than of a professional adult burglar, and the master of Five Oaks, thinking this matter worth inquiring into, called up the constable and laid the thing before him in this new light.

Mr. John Temple had no particular grudge against the Boy Scouts. He was a rational, hard-headed business man, decisive and practical and without much imagination. His lack of imagination was, indeed, his main trouble. He was not silly enough and he was extremely too busy to bear any active malice toward an organization having to do with boys, and except when the scouts were mentioned to him he never gave them a thought one way or the other. He was not the archenemy of the movement (as some of the boys themselves thought): he simply had no use for it.

So far as the scout idea had been explained to him by the Bridgeboro Local Council (to whom he had granted five minutes of his time) he thought it consisted of a sort of poetical theory and that money put into it was simply thrown away. He believed, and he told the Council so, that ample provision had been made for boys in

the form of circuses and movie plays and baseball games for good ones and reformatories and prisons for bad ones, and he referred, as the successful man is so apt to do, to his own poor boyhood and how he had attended to business and done what was right and so on, and so on, and so on.

Nor had this king of finance cherished any particular resentment toward the poor creature who had thrown a stone at him. John Temple was a big man and he was not petty, but he was intensely practical, and he had no patience with Mr. Ellsworth's notions for the making of good citizens. He had known two generations of Slades; he had never known any of them to amount to anything, and he believed that the proper place for a hoodlum and a truant and an orphan was in an institution. He paid his taxes for the support of these institutions regularly and he believed they ought to be used for what they were intended for. He thought it was little less than criminal that the son of Bill Slade should be wandering over the face of the earth when he might be legally placed in a dormitory, eating his three meals a day in a white-washed corridor.

For Mr. Ellsworth, John Temple had only con-

tempt. He looked down upon him as the man without imagination always looks down upon the man with imagination. Meanwhile the new subtle spirit was working in Tom Slade and the capitalist had neither the time nor the interest to stoop and watch the wonderful transformation which was going on.

He was not prompted by any feeling of spite or resentment toward Tom and the scouts when he told the constable about "young Slade." He believed that he was acting wisely and even in Tom's best interests, and it was in vain that his young daughter tried to pull him away from the telephone. Mrs. Temple weepingly implored him to remember the hospitality and the courtesy which she and Mary had just enjoyed at the hands of the scouts, but it was of no use. If no one had mentioned Tom he would never have thought of him, but since Mary had mentioned him he believed it was a good time to have Mr. Ellsworth's experiment with Tom looked into before "all the houses in the neighborhood were robbed." He did not mean that, of course; it was simply his way of talking.

It was the second morning after the Silver Foxes' proud recovery of Esther Blakeley's card

that a loose-jointed personage from Salmon River Village sauntered into camp, his face screwed up as if he were studying the sun, and surveyed the camp with that frank and leisurely scrutiny which bespeaks the "Rube." Concealed beneath his coat he wore a badge which he had fished out of an unused cooky-jar just before starting, and it swelled his rural pride to feel the weight of it on his suspender.

"Wha'ose boss here?" he asked Pee-wee, who was about his customary duty of spearing loose papers with a pointed stick.

"No boss," said Pee-wee.

"Wha'ose runnin' the shebang?"

Pee-wee pointed to Mr. Ellsworth's little tent just inside which the scoutmaster sat on an onion-crate stool, writing.

The official personage sauntered over, watched by several boys, paused to inspect the wireless apparatus in its little leanto. His inquisitive manner was rather jarring. By the time he reached Mr. Ellsworth's tent a little group had formed about him.

"Ya'ou the boss here?"

"Good-morning," said Mr. Ellsworth.

"Ya'ou the boss?"

"No; the boys are boss; anything we can do for you?"

The stranger looked about curiously. "Got permission t' camp here, I s'pose."

"There's the owner of the property," said Mr. Ellsworth, laughingly, indicating Roy.

"Hmmm; ye got a young feller here by th' name o' Slade?"

"That's what we have," said the scoutmaster with his usual breezy pleasantry.

"Well, I reckon I'll hev ter see him."

"Certainly; what for?" Mr. Ellsworth asked rather more interested.

"He's got hisself into a leetle mite o' trouble," the stranger drawled; "leastways, mebbe he has." He seemed to enjoy being mysterious.

So Tom was called. Roy came with him, and all who were in camp at the moment clustered about the scoutmaster's tent. Mr. Ellsworth's manner was one of perfect confidence in Tom and half-amusement at the stranger's relish of his own authority.

"You don't wish to see him privately, I suppose?"

"Na-o—leastways not 'less he does. Seems you was trespassing araound Five Oaks t'other

day," he said to Tom in his exasperating drawl, and with deliberate hesitation.

"Good heavens, man!" said Mr. Ellsworth, nettled. "You don't mean to tell me this boy is charged with trespassing! Why, half a dozen of these boys accompanied Mrs. Temple and her daughter home—they were invited into the house." He looked at the stranger, half angry and half amused. "Mrs. Temple and her daughter were our guests here. We might as well say *they* were trespassing!"

"Leastways they din't take nuthin'."

"What do you mean by that?" said the scoutmaster, sharply.

"Ye know a pin was missin' thar?"

"Yes," said Mr. Ellsworth, impatiently.

"An' one o' these youngsters was seen sneakin'——"

"Oh, no," the scoutmaster jerked out; "we don't do any sneaking here. Be careful how you talk. You are trespassing yourself, sir, if it comes to that."

There was never a moment in the troop's history, not even in that unpleasant scene in John Temple's vacant lot, when the boys so admired their scoutmaster. His absolute confidence in

every member of the troop thrilled them with an incentive which no amount of discipline could have inspired. It was plain to see that they felt this—all save Tom, whose face was a puzzle.

He stood there among them, his belt pulled unnecessarily tight, after the fashion of the boy who has always worn a suspender, the trim intent of the scout regalia hardly showing to advantage on his rather clumsy form. His puttees were never well adjusted; the khaki jacket (when he wore it) had a perverse way of working up in back. He presented a marked contrast to Roy's natty appearance and to Westy whose uniform fitted him so perfectly that he seemed to have been poured into it as a liquid into a mould. Both boys looked every inch a scout.

Yet there was something strangely distinctive about Tom as he stood there. A discerning person might have fancied his uncouthness as part and parcel of a certain rugged quality which could not be expressed in precise attire. There was something ominous in the dogged, sullen look which his countenance wore. He seemed a sort of law unto himself, having a certain resource in himself and seeking now neither advice nor assistance. He was no figure for the cover of the

Scout Handbook, yet he had drawn out of it its full measure of strength; he would accept no one's interpretation of it but his own and thus he stood among them and yet apart—as good a scout as ever raised his hand to take the oath.

"One o' these youngsters went daown stairs and raound the haouse t' th' pantry 'n' he was seen to go without warrant of law crost Temple's lawn and inter his private woods." The man had his little spats of legal phraseology, of course, and Mr. Ellsworth could almost have murdered him for his "without warrant of law."

"Any one of you boys go 'without warrant of law'?" asked the scoutmaster, with an air of humorous disgust.

"I did," said Tom simply.

The scoutmaster looked at him in surprise.

"What for, Tom?"

There was a moment's silence.

"I've got nothing to say," said Tom.

Doc. Carson, who was of all things observant, noticed a set appearance about Tom's jaw and a far-away look in his eyes as if he neither knew nor cared about any of those present.

"I s'pose if we was to search ye we wouldn't find nothin' on ye t' shouldn't be thar?"

"I am a scout of the sec—I am a scout," said Tom, impassively. "No one will search me."

It would be hard to describe the look in Mr. Ellsworth's eyes as he watched Tom. There was confidence, there was admiration, but withal an almost pathetic look of apprehension and suspense. He studied Tom as a pilot fixes his gaze intently upon a rocky shore. Tom did not look at him.

"Ye wouldn't relish bein' searched, I reckon?" the constable said with an exasperating grin of triumph.

Then the thunderbolt fell. Calmly Tom reached down into his pocket and brought forth the little class pin.

"I know what you want," he said. "I didn't know first off, but now I know. You couldn't search me—I wouldn' leave—let you. I could handle a marshal, and I'm stronger now than I was then. But you can't search me; you can't disgrace my patrol by searchin' them—or by searchin' me—'cause I wouldn't lea—let you. *Get away* from me!" with such frantic suddenness that they started. "Don't you try to take it from me! I'm a scout of—I'm a scout—mind! Where's Roy?"

"Tom," said Mr. Ellsworth, his voice tense with emotion.

"Where's Roy?" the boy asked, ignoring him.

Roy stepped forward as he had done once before when Tom was in trouble, and they made an odd contrast. "Here, Tom."

"You take it an' give it to Mary Temple and tell her it's tossin' it back—kind of. She'll know what I mean. You know how to go to places like that—but they get me scared. Tell her it's instead of the rubber ball, and that I sent it to her."

"Oh, Tom," said Mr. Ellsworth, his voice almost breaking, "is that all you have to say—Tom?"

"I'm a scout—I'm obeyin' the law—that's all," said Tom, doggedly. He seemed to be the only one of them all who was not affected, so sure did he feel of himself.

"Do I have to get arrested?" said he.

"Ye-es, I reckon I'll hev to take ye 'long," said the constable, advancing.

Tom never flinched.

Roy tried to speak but could only say, "Tom——"

Mr. Ellsworth put his palm to his forehead

and held it there a moment as if his head throbbed.

"Can I have my book?" Tom asked as the constable, taking his arm, took a step away.

It was Pee-wee who glided, scout pace, over to the Silver Foxes' tent. In the unusual situation it never occurred to him that he, a Raven, was entering it uninvited. Esther Blakeley's triumphant post card hung there but he never noticed it. He brought the well-thumbed Handbook with T. S. on it, and it was curious to see that he gave it to Roy instead of to Tom.

But Tom noticed his bringing it. "I'm glad you did your tracking stunt, Pee-wee," he said, with just a little quiver in his voice.

Roy handed him the book. Then, just as they started off, Mr. Ellsworth, gathering himself together as one coming out of a trance, accosted the departing constable.

"This boy was placed in my charge by the court in Bridgeboro," said he, holding the man off.

"That don't make no difference," drawled the man. "I got a right to go anywheres for a fugitive or a suspect. A guardian writ wouldn't be no use to ye in a criminal charge." And he smiled

as if he were perfectly willing to explain the law for the benefit of the uninitiated.

Tom, clutching his Handbook, walked along at the man's side. He seemed utterly indifferent to what was happening.

There were no camp-fire yarns that night.

CHAPTER XIII

HE WHO HAS EYES TO SEE

MR. ELLSWORTH did not respond to the call for supper that evening and Artie, who was cookee for the week, did not go to his tent a second time. The two patrols ate at the long board under a big elm tree; Tom's vacant place was conspicuous, but very little was said about the affair. It was noticeable that the Ravens made no mention of it out of respect to the other patrol.

After supper Roy went alone to Mr. Ellsworth's tent. There was a certain freedom of intimacy between these two, partly, no doubt, because Roy's father was on the Local Council. The scoutmaster had no favorites and the close relation between himself and Roy was not generally apparent in the troop. It was simply that Roy indulged in a certain privilege of intercourse which Mr. Ellsworth's cordial relations at the Blakeley home seemed to encourage, and I dare say Roy's own buoyant and charmingly aggressive

nature had a good deal to do with it. He also (though in quite another way than Tom) seemed a law unto himself.

Arranging himself with drawn up knees upon the scoutmaster's cot, he began without any introduction.

"Did you notice, Chief" (he often called the scoutmaster chief) "how he kept saying, 'I am a scout'?"

"Yes, I did," said Mr. Ellsworth, wearily. "It's the one ray of hope."

"Did you notice how he said he was obeying the law?"

"Yes, he did; I had forgotten that."

"His wanting the Handbook, too," said Mr. Ellsworth, quietly, "had a certain ring to it."

"Did you ever take a squint at that Handbook of his, Chief?"

"No," said Mr. Ellsworth, smiling wanly; "I'm not as observant as you, Roy."

"He has simply worn it out—it's a sight."

"His mind is not complex," said Mr. Ellsworth, half-heartedly, "yet he's a mystery."

"Everything is literal to Tom, Chief; he sees only two colors, black and white."

There was another pause.

"Why don't you eat a little something, Chief?"

"No, not to-night, Roy. I can't. If that thing is true—if there's no explanation, why, then my whole structure falls down; and John Temple is right." His voice almost broke. "Tom is either no scout at all or else——"

"Or else he's about the best scout that lives," interrupted Roy. "Will you ever forget how he looked as he stood there? Hanged if I can! I've seen pictures enough of scouts—waving flags and doing good turns and holding staves and looking like trim little soldiers——"

"Like you, Roy," smiled Mr. Ellsworth

"But I never saw anything like that! Did you notice his mouth? His——"

"I know," said Mr. Ellsworth, "he looked like a martyr."

"Whenever you see a picture of a scout," said Roy, "it always shows what a scout can do with his hands and feet; he's tracking or signalling or something like that. *There* was a picture that shows the other side of it. You never see those pictures in the books. Cracky, but I'd like to have gotten a snap-shot of him just as he stood there with his mouth set like the jaws of a trap, his eyes ten miles away and

his hand clutching that battered old Handbook."

"I'm glad you dropped in, Roy, it cheers me up."

"Oh, I'm a good scout," laughed Roy. "I'm not thinking about you; I'm selfish. I'm the one that hauled Tom across, you know, and I've got *my* reputation to look after. That's all *I* care about."

Mr. Ellsworth smiled.

"I'm going to dig out the truth about this between now and to-morrow morning. I may have to trespass even, but *I* should worry. What are *you* going to do?"

"Nothing to-night. In the morning I'll see Mr. Temple and also Tom, and see if I can't get him to talk. What else *can* I do? What are you going to do?"

"I decline to be interviewed," Roy laughed.

"Well, don't you get into any trouble, Roy."

After the boy had gone, Mr. Ellsworth picked up his own copy of the *Handbook for Boys,* and looked with a wistful smile at the picturesque, natty youngster on the cover, holding the red flags. It always reminded him of Roy.

Roy was satisfied that the only hope of learning anything was to visit the scene of Tom's suspi-

cious, or at least unexplained, departure from the Temple house. About this he knew no more than what the constable had said, but he firmly believed that whatever Tom had done and wherever he had gone, it had been for a purpose. He did not believe that Tom had taken the pin, but he felt certain that if he *had* been tempted to, he (Roy) would have seen him do so. For a scout is not only loyal, he is watchful. His confidence in Tom, no less than his confidence in himself, made him morally certain that his friend was innocent; and Tom's own demeanor at the time of his arrest made him doubly certain.

A little before dark, Roy put on his Indian moccasins, took his pocket flashlight and a good stock of matches, and started for Five Oaks. Reaching there, he made sure the veranda was deserted (for which fact he had to thank the chill air) and found it easy to trace Tom's footprints around to the back of the house through the almost bare earth of the new lawn.

In the little recess by the pantry window he felt more secure. The play of his flashlight quickly discovered the painty smear on the window-sill and he examined it closely, as Tom had recently done, but Roy's mental alertness saved

him time and trouble. Instead of trying to pick out footprints across the back lawn, he hurried across it, ran along to the end of the fence, and then back again, closely watching the upper rail by the aid of his light. Sure enough, there was a faint smootch of paint and by this easy discovery he had saved himself several hundred feet of difficult tracking. Better still, his own suspicions and the servants' original story were confirmed.

Tom might have gone around the house, but *someone else had climbed through the pantry window.*

For a while Roy and his trusty ally, the pocket flashlight, had a pretty rough tussle of it with the secretive floor of pine-needles in the woods beyond the fence; but Tom's own uncertain pauses and turnings and kneelings helped him, and he was thankful that his predecessor had left these signs of his own movements to guide him. For he now felt certain that Tom had passed here in the wake of someone else.

It was a long time before he found himself in the beaten path, having covered a distance of perhaps an eighth of a mile where his tracking had been, as he later said himself, like hunting for a pin on a carpet in the dark. He had been on his

hands and knees most of the time, shooting his light this way and that, moving the pine-needles carefully away from some fancied indentation, with almost a watch-maker's delicacy of touch. It was not so much tracking as it was the working out of a puzzle, but it brought him at last into the path and then he found something which rendered further tracking unnecessary. This was the flask which had lain beside Tom's father.

And now Roy, with no human presence to distract him as Tom had had, noticed something lying near the flask which Tom had not seen. This was a little scrap of pasteboard which had evidently been the corner of a ticket, and holding his flashlight to it he examined it carefully. There was the termination of a sentence, ". . . ers' Union," and the last letters of a name, ". . . ade," which had been written with ink on a printed line.

It meant nothing to him except as the slightest thing means something to a scout, but he began searching diligently for more of the torn fragments of this card. The breeze had been there before him and he had crept on hands and knees many feet in every direction before his search was rewarded by enough of these scattered scraps,

to enlighten him. But the light which they shed was like a searchlight!

Using his membership card for a background and some pine gum to stick the fragments to it, he succeeded in restoring enough of the card to learn that it was a membership card of the Bricklayers' Union belonging to one William Slade.

Then, all of a sudden, he caught the whole truth and understood what had happened.

CHAPTER XIV

ROY TO THE RESCUE

It was late when Roy reached camp and he spoke to no one. Early in the morning he repaired to Five Oaks to "beard the lion in his den" and have a personal interview with Mr. John Temple.

There was nothing about Mr. Temple or his house which awed Roy in the least. He had been reared in a home of wealth and that atmosphere which poor Tom could not overcome his fear of did not trouble Roy at all. He was as much at ease in the presence of his elders as it is possible for a boy to be without disrespect, but he was now to be put to the test.

He found Mr. Temple enjoying an after-breakfast smoke on the wide veranda at Five Oaks, a bag of golf sticks beside him.

"Good morning, Mr. Temple," said Roy.

If one had to encounter Mr. John Temple at all, this was undoubtedly the best time and place to do it.

"Good morning, sir," said he, brusquely but not unpleasantly.

"I guess maybe you know me, Mr. Temple; I'm Mr. Blakeley's boy."

Mr. Temple nodded. Roy leaned against the rubble-stone coping of the veranda.

"Mr. Temple," said he, "I came to see you about something. At first I was going to ask Mr. Ellsworth to do it, then I decided I would do it myself."

Mr. Temple worked his cigar over to the corner of his mouth, looking at Roy curiously and not without a touch of amusement. What he saw was a trim, sun-browned boy wrestling with a charming little touch of diffidence, trying to decide how to proceed in this matter which was so important to him and so trifling to John Temple, but exhibiting withal the inherent self-possession which bespeaks good breeding. He was half sitting on the coping and half leaning against it, his browned, muscular arms pressing it on either side.

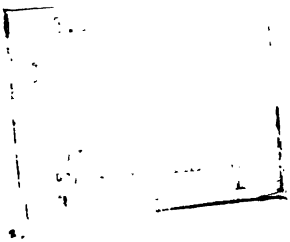
Perhaps it was the incongruity of the encounter, or perhaps his recent breakfast and his good cigar, but he said not unpleasantly, "Lift yourself up there and sit down if you want to. What can I do for you?"

Roy lifted himself up on the coping and swung his legs from it and felt at home.

"It's about Tom Slade, Mr. Temple. I know you don't like him and haven't much use for any of us scouts, and I was afraid if Mr. Ellsworth came to see you there might be an argument or something like that, but there couldn't be one with me because I'm only a kid and I don't know how to argue. But there's another reason too; I stood for Tom—brought him into the troop—and he's my friend and whatever is done for him *I* want to do it. I'll tell you what he did—you know, he's changed an awful lot since you knew him. I don't say a fellow would always change so much but *he's* changed an awful lot. You'd hardly believe what I'm going to tell you if you didn't know about his changing. It was his own father, Mr. Temple, that took Mary's pin—it wasn't Tom. I'm dead sure of it, and I'll tell you how I know.

"I think he went out of the room where the rest of us were that day because he was afraid he might see you—ashamed, you know—kind of. I'd have felt the same way if I had thrown stones at you. Well, he went around the house—I don't know just why he did that—but anyway, he found tracks there and he found a paint smudge on the

"SOMETIMES A FELLOW IS AFRAID OF A GIRL."



window-ledge where the burglar climbed out. There's another smudge on the fence where the burglar got over. Tom tracked him and found it was his own father and he got the pin from him, but I suppose maybe he was afraid to come and give it to Mary. You know, sometimes a fellow is afraid of a girl——"

John Temple smiled slightly.

"And he was afraid of you, too, I suppose, and that's where he fell down, keeping the pin in his pocket. I know it was his father because—here. I'll show you, Mr. Temple. Here's his membership card in a union with his name on it, and this is what I think. He stopped in the woods and tore this up so there wouldn't be anything on him to show his name and that was just when Tom found him. Tom wouldn't tell about it because it's one of our laws that a scout must be loyal. So I want to give this pin to Mary and then I want Tom to go back with me because it's our troop birthday pretty soon—we've been going two years and——"

"Come around and show me your smudge and your tracks," said Mr. Temple. "If what you say is true you can go down in the car with me and I'll withdraw the complaint and do what I can

to have the matter expedited. You might let me have the pin."

"Couldn't I give it to Mary?"

"Yes, if she's about."

It was there in the spacious veranda that Roy handed Mary the pin and told her exactly what Tom had asked him to say.

The chauffeur who saw Mr. Temple step into the touring car followed by Roy, carrying the golf sticks, was a little puzzled. He was still more puzzled to hear his master making inquiries about tracking. After they had gone a few hundred yards he was ordered to stop and then he saw Roy run back to the house and return with two more golf sticks which his master had forgotten.

If John Temple had had the least recollection of that scene in his own vacant lot in Bridgeboro, he might have recalled the prophetic words of Mr. Ellsworth, *"by our fruits shall you know us, Mr. Temple."*

Doubtless, he had forgotten that incident. The tracking business, however, interested him; he was by no means convinced, but he was sufficiently persuaded to say the word which would free Tom. Roy's assumption of full responsibility in regard to the golf sticks amused him, and Roy's general

behaviour pleased him more than he allowed Roy to know.

He had no particular interest in the scouts, but away down in the heart of John Temple was a wish for something which he could not procure with his check-book, and that was a son. A son like Roy would not be half bad. He rather liked the way the boy had sat on the coping and swung his legs.

CHAPTER XV

LEMONADE AND OLIVES

It fell out that on one of those fair August days there came out from Bridgeboro a picnic party of people who were forced to take their nature by the day, and following in the wake of these, as the peanut-man follows the circus, there came that trusty rear-guard of all such festive migrations,—Slats Corbett, the "Two aces" (Jim and Jakie Mattenburg), two of the three O'Connor boys (the other one had mumps), and, yea, even Sweet Caporal himself.

The petrified mud of Bridgeboro was upon their clothes, the dust of it was in the corners of their unwashed eyes. They wore no badges but if they had these should have shown a leaden goat superimposed upon a tomato can, with a tobacco-label ribbon, so suggestive were they of street corners and vacant lots and ash heaps.

It was a singular freak of fate that the destiny of the carefully-nurtured Connover Bennett should have been involved with this gallant crew.

The picnic was conducted according to the time-honored formula of such festivities. There were lemonade and cold coffee in milk bottles; there were sandwiches in shoe boxes; there were hard-boiled eggs with accompanying salt in little twists of brown paper; there were olives and hat-pins to extract them with, and there were camel's hair shawls to "spread on the damp ground."

The rear-guard did not participate in the sumptuous feast. "A life on the ocean wave" was what they sought, and their investigations of the wooded neighborhood had not gone very far when they made discovery of an object which of all things is dear to the heart of a city boy, and that was a boat.

It was pulled up along the river bank near the picnic grounds, and as a matter of fact, belonged to the scouts. It was used by them in crossing the river to make a short-cut to and from Salmon River Village, instead of following the shore to a point opposite the town where there was a bridge.

"Findings is keepings" is the first law of the hoodlum code, and though the O'Connor boys hung back (partly because they had no right to the boat and more because they were afraid of the

water), Sweet Caporal, who balked at nothing save a policeman, led the rest of his intrepid band to the boat and presently they were flopping clumsily about in midstream, much to the amusement of the O'Connor boys and several of the picnickers who clustered at the shore.

There are few sights more ridiculous than the ignorant handling of a boat. Sweet Caporal wielded an oar, Slats Corbett wrestled with another one, Jakie Mattenburg gallantly manned the helm, invariably pulling the tiller-lines the wrong way, while Jim Mattenburg, with a broken and detached thwart, did his best to counteract every effort of his companions. Amid these conflicting activities the boat made no progress and the ineffectual splashing and the contradictory orders which were shouted by the several members of the gallant crew were greeted with derisive hoots from the shore.

Several times an oar slipped its lock and went splashing into the water; once Sweet Caporal himself was capsized by the catching of the unwieldy oar in its lock and tumbled ingloriously backward into the bottom of the boat.

"Pull on the left one!" shouted Jim.

"Nah, pull on de odder one!" cried Slats.

"Both pull together," sagely suggested someone on the shore, but that was quite impossible.

"Hold de rudder in de middle, yer gump!" shouted Sweet Caporal.

"If yer want de boat to go to de right, pull on de left rope," shouted Jim.

"No, de right one," corrected Sweet Caporal.

So Jakie Mattenburg took a chance with the right rope and whatever good effect that might have had was immediately counteracted by his brother who paddled frantically on the left side with his broken thwart until he lost it in the water.

This loss might have helped matters some if Jakie had not unshipped the rudder altogether, and hauled it aboard like a rebellious fish, by the long tiller-lines.

"Both sit on de same seat," commanded Sweet Caporal, and Slats Corbett took his place alongside him, while the boat rocked perilously.

"Now, both pull together!" called one of the laughing watchers.

So they pulled together with such a frantic stroke that one of the oar-locks was lifted from its socket and dropped into the water. The sudden dislodgment of the oar precipitated Slats

against one of the Mattenburg boys who thereupon announced that he would man the oar instead. While he was taking his place Sweet Caporal continued to pull frantically, the oar sliding back in its lock and the boat going around in a circle.

"Put dat rudder on," commanded Sweet Caporal.

"Can't find no place it fits inter," said Jakie, reaching under the water at the stern.

"Well, paddle wid it, den," said Slats.

So Jakie, grasping the rudder by its neck, proceeded to paddle with it off one side until the cross-bar broke and the lines got into a hopeless tangle with his arms.

"What did I tell yer?" shouted Slats.

"Now—one—two—three," encouraged someone on shore.

Sweet Caporal, holding his oar about two feet from its end so as to lose all its leverage, pulled furiously, the blade only catching the water occasionally, Jim Mattenburg, with no oar-lock at all, improvised one hand into a lock and hauled frantically with the other one, while Jakie Mattenburg bailed the boat, which was now pretty loggy with its weight of water.

"Talk about your Yale Crew!" called one of the watchers.

"The new marine merry-go-round!" shouted another.

"Now—one—two——"

The sharp crack of a rifle was heard from the woods on the opposite shore from the picnickers; one of the Mattenburg boys was conscious of a quick, short whizzing sound, and then Charlie, the youngest of the O'Connor boys, who was standing close to the shore, slapped his right hand quickly to his left arm, looked about bewildered, then turned suddenly pale and staggered into the arms of one of the picnic party.

"Look—look," he said, releasing his hand and affrightedly pointing to a little trickle of blood on his arm. "I'm—I'm shot—look——"

CHAPTER XVI

CONNOVER BREAKS LOOSE

ADVANCING stealthily, our young hero raised his rifle and leveled it at the chief of the howling Zulus, who clustered threateningly on the farther shore. The young girl whom they had kidnapped lay bound hand and foot, and Dan Dreadnought clenched his teeth with anger as he heard her cries for help. The poisoned spears of the infuriated Zulus were flying all about him, but they did not cower the brave lad. He was resolved at any cost to rescue that girl.

"I am a Boy Scout," he called, "and I can handle a hundred savages if need be." Then, uttering the cry of the Eureka Patrol, he dashed into the dugout which lay drawn up on the shore, and using the butt end of his rifle for a paddle, he guided his unsteady boat across the raging torrent amid a fusillade of spears and arrows with which the frantic Zulus vainly sought to stay his approach.

"I am Lieutenant of the Eureka Patrol!" called Dan. "Untie those fetters, or every one of you shall die!"

His trusty companion, Ralph Redgore, tried to hold him back, but all in vain.

Connover Bennett laid down the copy of *The Eureka Patrol in South Africa,* by Captain Dauntless, U. S. A., and dragging himself from the hammock, entered the house. He was breathing hard as if he had been running.

The bungalow was deserted save for the maid in the kitchen, and Connover was monarch of all he surveyed.

Quietly, he crept upstairs and into the "den." In the corner among his father's fishing-rods and golf sticks stood a rifle. It was forbidden to Connover, but unfortunately *The Eureka Patrol in South Africa* dealt not with scout honor and made no mention of the Seventh Law, which stipulates that a "scout shall be obedient." Nor had Captain Dauntless thought it worth while to mention Law One, which says that a "scout's honor is to be trusted."

Connover glanced up and down the road from the bay-window to see if by any chance his mother might have forgotten something and was com-

ing back. Reassured in this particular, he took up the rifle and, standing before the large pier-glass, he adopted a heroic attitude of aiming. Then he looked from the window down into the woods through which he could see little glints of the river.

It was not glints of Salmon River that he saw, but the "Deadly Morass River" of South Africa; the woods were not quiet, fragrant pine woods where the First Bridgeboro Troop of real scouts was encamped, but the deadly morass itself; and he was not Connover Bennett, but *Dan Dreadnought,* and this was the trusty rifle with which he would——

He looked again from the bay-window to make sure that his mother was not in sight. Then the creaking of a door startled him and he laid the rifle down. It was queer how every little sound startled him. He unfastened his negligee shirt at the neck and, standing before the pier-glass, arranged it as much like the frontispiece pictures of *Dan Dreadnought* as possible. There was a curious fluttering feeling in his chest all the while which annoyed him. It did not seem to jibe at all with the heroic program.

Yes, this was the rifle with which he would. . .

He tiptoed to the stairs and listened, "Molly, is that you?" he called.

"Yes, Master Connover."

"All right, I just wanted to know."

He went back into the room and opening the drawer of the desk, took out a box of cartridges, extracted several and put them in his pocket. When he replaced the box he forgot which end of the drawer he had taken it from and was in a quandary where to place it. He took up the rifle again, then laid it down and the thud of its butt on the floor startled him. What a lot of noise it seemed to make!

It was oily and his hands were oily from it and left an oily stain on the felt covering of the desk. He placed the inkstand over it, and all the while he felt very strange and nervous; trembling almost as he planned his exploit.

Then he took the rifle and got behind the revolving-chair, and rested the weapon on it. It was not a very realistic jungle, but . . .

He saw the Zulus just as plain as day; and he saw himself, or rather, *Dan Dreadnought,* in that big pier-glass.

He knew the gun was not loaded and he pulled the trigger, which clicked.

The click seemed louder than he thought it would and he listened in suspense.

No sound.

Yes, this was the rifle with which he would . . .

Casting one more cautious look from the window, he shouldered the weapon and hurried quietly down the stairs.

"What time did my mother say she'd be back?" he called.

"Not till dinnertime, Master Connover."

He crossed the road, and headed through the woods toward the river. Once in the woods, the spirit of freedom took possession of him and he indulged in the luxury of shooting the gun at nothing at all.

" 'I am a scout,' " he said, " 'and can handle a hundred savages!' "

Whereas, in plain fact, he couldn't have been much farther from being a scout.

Arrested by a flutter in one of the trees, he leveled his gun again and by the luck of a random shot, brought down a robin. The sight of its quivering body and loose-hanging neck as it lay at his feet almost frightened him for he had never killed a red-blooded creature before, and he felt now a sense of heavy guilt. He was afraid to

pick the robin up and when he finally did so and saw how wilted and drooping the thing was and how aimlessly the head swung he was seized with a little panic of fear and dropped it suddenly.

But it was absolutely necessary that he should carry out his program of encountering the Zulus. As long as he was not really going to kill anyone it was all right. He was at least going to have the thrill of that experience. Now that he had killed the robin, he found that in actual practice he preferred a sort of modified *Dan Dreadnought* to the real one; and he could piece out with his imagination the more harrowing features of Captain Dauntless's book.

So he pictured a dugout drawn up on the shore of the river which he was approaching; and he pictured a group of howling Zulus on the farther shore. He heard voices and the splashing of water, and it fitted well with his heroic scheme to imagine these sounds were made by the howling Zulus, though in reality he knew, or thought he knew, that they came from farther up the river near the scouts' camp.

He was within a few yards of the river now and pushing through the thick growth which bordered it.

His imagination was working like machinery, and had all the features and details of his daring act, pat.

" 'I am a boy scout,' " he repeated, " 'and can handle——' "

He raised his rifle and, aiming with dramatic gesture at nothing in particular, pulled the trigger, then dashed forward in a perfect frenzy of adventurous delight to the shore.

On the other side of the river the O'Connor boy was leaning back in the arms of one of a group of people, the boys in the boat were mending their efforts to get to shore; someone said, "There he is!" and then all eyes were upon him and Connover Bennett dropped the gun, reeled against a tree and stood staring as he realized that he was nearer to being the real *Dan Dreadnought* than he had dreamed.

A cold sweat broke out upon his brow, his first impulse was to run with all his might and main; but he could not stir.

CHAPTER XVII

THE REAL THING

It happened that same afternoon that Tom and Roy went up to Salmon River Village to purchase some provisions for camp. The two boys were on their way back from the village and were discussing an interesting discovery which they had made while there. This was a wireless apparatus which the storekeeper had shown them with great pride for he was one of that numerous class of wireless amateurs whose aërials may be seen stretching from tree-tops to house-tops these days, and since it was his pleasure to sit into the wee hours of the morning with his head receivers on, eavesdropping on the whole world, the two scouts had agreed to exchange messages with him.

"Every man you meet seems to take some interest in the scouts," said Tom, in allusion to the cordial storekeeper.

"Sure, even Mr. Temple's got a light case of it."

"Not much!" said Tom.

"Oh, yes he has; he's got what Doc Carson calls a passive case. Doesn't it beat all how Doc gets onto this medical talk? Did you hear that one he sprang the other night about a 'superficial abrasion'? Cracky, it nearly knocked me over!"

"And 'septic,' too," said Tom.

"Yes, 'septic's' his star word now. Mr. Temple's case is likely to become acute any time," Roy added as he jogged along, jumping from one subject to another according to his fashion. "You know you can have a thing and not know it. Then something happens, you get a bad cold, for instance, and that brings the whole thing out. That's the way it is with Mr. Temple—he's just beginning to get the bug; he doesn't know it yet. You ought to have heard him buzz me about tracking.

"Then he wanted to know how I knew one golf stick was hickory and another one maple. 'Scout,' said I. Oh, I've got *him* started—wait till he picks up a little momentum and you'll see things fly."

"You'll never land *him,*" said Tom.

"I landed you, didn't I?"

"Sure."

"I bet I land him before the Chief lands Mrs. Bennett."

They walked along a little while in silence.

"What—what—did Mary say?" Tom asked. He had asked the question half a dozen times before, but it pleased him to imagine that he had forgotten the answer. Roy understood.

"She wanted to know why you didn't bring the pin yourself."

"What'd you tell her?"

"Oh, I told her you were too busy to bother."

"No—honest——"

"I told her you had no time for girls. She said it was *just lovely*. I don't know whether she meant you or the pin. She said the tracking was *miraculous*."

"She don't know who——"

"No, her father's not going to tell her. I've got him cinched. I wouldn't be surprised if I was cashier in his bank in another six months—but don't mention it at camp fire, will you?"

Tom laughed. "What did she say?" he repeated.

"I told you 'steen-eleven times."

"Well, I forget."

"You ought to have gone yourself, anyway," said Roy, "then you'd have heard what she said."

He pretended not to have any sympathy with Tom in this matter.

"What was that other thing she said?"

"What's that shouting?" said Roy.

"What was that other thing she said?"

"What other thing?"

"You know."

"I guess that picnic bunch is flopping around on the river from the sound."

Silence for a few minutes.

"What was that other thing she said?"

"Oh, yes," said Roy, "let's see—I forget."

"Go on—stop your fooling! What was it?"

"Do you *have* to know?"

"What was it?"

"She said she was going to recip—— Oh, listen!"

"Re—what?"

"Reciprocate."

"What's that?"

"Pay you back."

"I wouldn't take a cent. I wouldn't take anything from her," said Tom. "I'm a sco——"

"Now don't spring that! You better wait and see what she offers you first."

"Would you take anything for a service?"

"Depends on what it was," said Roy cautiously.

"*I* wouldn't take anything for a service."

"No?"

"I wouldn't take anything from her."

But he did just the same.

They had left the road and were jogging scout-pace along the beaten path through the woods which led down to the river. As they neared it, a confusion of sounds and voices greeted their ears and when they presently emerged upon the shore they found a scene of pandemonium.

In mid-stream was their own boat, two-thirds full of water, and clinging to it were Tom's erst-while Bridgeboro friends and a frantic, shrieking creature whose streaming hair was plastered over his face and who was in a perfect panic of fright as every moment the gunwale of the loggy boat gave with his weight and lowered his head into the water.

On the farther shore one little group called futilely to the hapless crew, bidding them cling to the gunwale and hold still; sensible enough advice, except that no advice is of any use to a person in peril of drowning. The bedraggled creature in particular would have prevented any such orderly and rational conduct by his terror-stricken clutch-

ings and cries of "Save me!" as if he were the only one in trouble. Another little group on the opposite shore was gathered about a figure which Tom and Roy could not see.

"Have you got a rope over there?" called Roy, kicking off his sneakers.

"No, we haven't——"

"Got a shawl or a blanket?"

"Yes—what good——"

"Get it quick!"

"They always have camels'-hair shawls," he said hastily to Tom. Then raising his voice, "Someone drowned over there?"

"No, shot."

"Killed?"

"No."

"Shin up that tree and see if you can get camp with your whistle," he ordered to Tom, throwing off his shirt the while. "Whistle 'Help' by Morse —if they don't answer, try semaphore with your shirt; if that don't get them you'll have to hoof it. Get Doc, whatever you do. Shut up, will you?" he shouted to the frantic boy who was making all the noise. "Keep your mouth shut and you'll be all right!"

All this took but a few seconds and presently

the shrieking boy in the water grasped frantically at Roy.

That was all he knew. Something struck him, and when he recovered from his daze he was lying on shore with several persons about him.

The new *Dan Dreadnought* was a pitiable figure. The boy whom he had shot sat near him, ashen white, his arm bleeding despite all efforts to stay the flow of blood, and he himself, his voice husky from his futile shrieking, the red mark of Roy's prompt but necessary blow standing out in bold relief on his white face, lay, half dead with fright and shock, and watched those about him as though in a trance. It was a sad and inglorious end to his adventurous career!

It took Roy but a few minutes to tear a couple of shawls and a blanket into strips and tying these together he took an end in his mouth and swam out for the boat. Tying it to the painter-ring, he called to the people on shore to pull easily and, himself guiding and holding up the loggy, half-submerged boat, as best he could, it was finally hauled out of deep water and its hapless crew helped ashore.

Just as Roy helped that redoubtable leader, Sweet Caporal, to scramble up the abrupt shore,

a welcome shout came from a tree top across the river.

"They're coming!"

Roy did not know whether it had been done by Morse whistling or by semaphore. Tom had done it, that was enough, and while he scrambled down from the tree and swam across the river Roy rearranged the clumsily made tourniquet which the picnickers had placed about the arm of the wounded boy, and tightened it with the leverage of a stick which successfully stayed the flow of blood.

"Some wrinkle, hey?" he said, smiling down into the white face of the boy. "You could lift the earth by leverage if you only had some floor for your lever; ever hear that?"

No, the O'Connor boy had never heard that, but he looked up into the cheery, brown eyes of Roy, whom he knew slightly, and smiled himself.

The real scout and the burlesque scout who lay near by presented a striking contrast. All the mock heroics of the *Eureka Patrol* of Captain Dauntless seemed cheap enough now, even to the frightened Connover as he languidly watched this quiet exhibition of efficiency. Never had he ad-

mired *Dan Dreadnought* as he now admired Roy Blakeley, this cheerful, clean-cut fellow who knew what to do and just how to do it; and the gang, with all their bravado gone, watched him too, feeling strange after the first bath they had had in many a day.

"Do you know what I'm going to do with you?" said Roy, as he leaned over the O'Connor boy and bathed his face. "I'm going to give you to Mr. Ellsworth for a birthday present; our troop's two years old next week."

It was not many minutes before the welcome sound of voices was heard in the wood and presently a half-dozen scouts appeared with a canvas stretcher. Mr. Ellsworth was with them and by his side was Doc Carson, or "Highbrow Doc," with his neat little first-aid case. Doc was one of the ancient and honorable Ravens who were not unconscious of their dignity, and he had had the first-aid bee from the start.

It took him but a moment to determine that no fatalities were going to result from the affair, and that all Connover needed was a little reassuring that he would not be sent to jail.

While he was putting an antiseptic dressing on the O'Connor boy's arm (the bullet had gone in

and out again through the fleshy part), Roy and Tom heard for the first time the circumstances of the whole affair, as they were related to Mr. Ellsworth.

It seemed that upon the appearance of Connover with his gun he had been forbidden to go away and had obeyed, probably because he was too frightened and helpless to have any will of his own. His pitiable lack of command throughout the whole affair was not the least significant thing in his day's work, and showed how far he was from the real scout trail.

The occupants of the boat, spurred by the emergency, had managed to get the frightened Connover aboard and it was in their clumsy progress across the river that one of the gunwales of the already loggy boat had gone under, shipping more water than the craft could carry besides its living occupants.

The O'Connor boy needed only prompt and efficient treatment and the only peril he was in was that of blood-poisoning. Doc dressed his wound antiseptically and though he was not unable to walk, they bore him to camp on the stretcher, for his loss of blood had weakened him and the shock had unnerved him.

Just as they started Connover broke down completely, clinging pitifully to Mr. Ellsworth and refusing to go home. His fear of arrest on the one hand and his fear of his parents on the other, made him go to pieces entirely now that the first excitement was over. His behaviour formed a ludicrous anti-climax for all the *Dan Dreadnought* bombast and bravado, and if it was not borne in upon him then how harmful the books were, he at least began to see how ridiculous they were. Indeed, the redoubtable *Dan* had begun to lose prestige with Connover the moment he had shot that robin.

At the sight of this childish display, Mr. Ellsworth shook his head ruefully and said to Roy, "We got away with it in Tom's case, but I'm afraid Connie's a pretty big contract. What do you think?"

"He'll come across," said Roy. "He didn't hurt Charlie O'Connor so very much, but I'll bet he's killed *Dan Dreadnought* all right."

"Well, Connie," said the scoutmaster, in a half-indulgent tone that was not altogether complimentary, "you'd better come along with us to camp."

"Will you—will you—see my mother?"

"Ye-es—guess so."

"He—he won't die—will he?"

"After forty or fifty years he might," said the scoutmaster. "Here, walk along with me, and tell me how you came to shoot that rifle."

CHAPTER XVIII

MRS. BENNETT COMES ACROSS

CONNOVER told him the whole story. In his extremity he felt drawn to Mr. Ellsworth though he showed it in a more effeminate way than Tom had shown it, and the readiness with which he made the scoutmaster a refuge rather jarred upon Mr. Ellsworth. Tom, at least, had never gone to pieces like this.

But the scout movement draws its recruits from every direction, and Mr. Ellsworth was the ideal scoutmaster.

"Well, then you think you wouldn't like to kill Zulus, after all, hey?"

"N-no, sir."

"Too bad we had to sacrifice an innocent robin, to find that out, wasn't it?"

"Yes, sir."

The maid at the Bennett bungalow had one good scout quality; she was observant and the fleeting glimpse which she had of Master Con-

nover departing with the rifle was promptly communicated to Mrs. Bennett upon her return.

At the appalling picture of her son trudging across the road into the woods with a fire-arm over his shoulder, the good lady all but collapsed. Her first thought was, of course, that he would shoot himself, which seemed likely enough, and her fear for his safety entirely obliterated her amazement at his shameless disobedience. It was the day of Mrs. Bennett's Waterloo.

Out she went, and even in her haste and excitement she picked up the *Dan Dreadnought* volume which sprawled on the veranda, and tossed it into the swinging seat, then hurried across the road and into the woods. The worst thing she had against Captain Dauntless was that he littered her tidy porch.

She followed the same beaten path to the river which Connover had followed and when she reached the bank a few belated stragglers of the picnic party were gathering up their belongings on the opposite side. One of them came over for her in the boat and told her briefly of what had happened.

"Is he alive or dead?" she demanded, hysterically. "Tell me the worst!"

Her inquiry was for Connover, of course, and upon being told that his only trouble was a case of utter fright, she said, "Oh, my poor boy!"

She followed the trail to Camp Ellsworth, hurrying along the beaten path which the scouts had made, until glimpses of their homelike little settlement were visible through the trees.

As she approached it she noticed, even in her anxiety, wide bands of bright red high up on the tree-trunks at intervals. She learned later that these were to indicate the path as well as might be, for a distance on either side of it so that no arrow or missile of any sort should be shot across it. It was one of several precautions to guard against the breaking of this inviolable rule. The path was sacred territory.

Mrs. Bennett was now within the outskirts of the camp and could smell the savory odor of cooking. She passed the tree where the Silver Foxes had spiked a piece of birch-bark with S. F. chalked upon it to indicate that the boys of that patrol were watching the industrious activities of a certain squirrel which patronized that particular tree. Another trunk bore a similar card with R. on it, showing that the Ravens were spying on the private affairs of an oriole which nested above.

Little that oriole knew that seven photographs of him were pasted in the Troop Book.

At camp a Red Cross flag had been raised above Mr. Ellsworth's own tent and except for the quiet comings and going of the scoutmaster himself and Doc Carson, all was quiet here. Mrs. Bennett had expected to find the camp a scene of commotion.

"*Good* evening, Mrs. Bennett," said the scoutmaster, in a tone of pleasant surprise. The spider was in his web at last, but he concealed his feeling of elation. "You are just in time to grace the festive board. We're going to have corn wiggles; did you ever eat a corn wiggle, Mrs. Bennett?"

"Where is my boy?" she demanded.

"Sit down, won't you? He's over there learning how to tell a mushroom from a toadstool—something every boy ought to know."

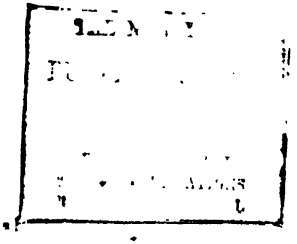
"And this other boy?" she added, glancing inside the tent.

"Fine—doing fine. One of our boys hiked it to town for a doctor, and I thought you were he when the sentinel told me someone was coming."

"You saw me coming?"

"No, we heard you long before we saw you. I wish now that Connover's sense of hearing were

MRS. BENNETT "COMES ACROSS."



a little more acute. Then he'd have been able to distinguish the locality of a human voice. But there's no use crying over spilled milk."

Mrs. Bennett listened breathlessly while he repeated the story of the afternoon's occurrences. While he was talking a scout approached, removed his hat, saluted Mr. Ellsworth, and handed him a paper. It was a memorandum of the temperature of the river water, an amateur forecast of the weather for the next day, and a "stunt" proposition for O. K. The scoutmaster asked one or two questions and dismissed the messenger. Mrs. Bennett was a little surprised to notice that the questions seemed to bear with practical sense and foresight upon the physical welfare of the boys.

"Do you give your approval to everything?" she asked.

"No—not always," he laughed.

"And what then? You can't *watch* them *all.*"

"Oh, dear, no; I just give my veto and forget it."

"You take the temperature of the river?"

"Yes, and test it for impurities twice a week. Doc attends to that. Come inside, Mrs. Bennett."

She greeted the reclining O'Connor boy and smoothed his forehead tenderly.

"Have his parents been notified?"

"No, I'm going to town myself this evening," said Mr. Ellsworth. "I'll tell them. My idea is to have him remain with us."

"And who will care for him while you are gone?"

Mr. Ellsworth laughed. "Oh, Doc will be glad to get rid of me," said he. "I'll be back to-morrow."

"You bathed it with carbolic, did you?"

"No, Doc tells me carbolic is a little out of date. How about that, Doc?"

Doc assented and there was something so eloquently suggestive of efficiency about Doc that, although Mrs. Bennett sniffed audibly, she did not venture to ask what antiseptic had been used. She had supposed that antiseptics of all kinds would be quite unheard of in a camp of boys, and here out in the woods she was being told by a quiet, respectful young fellow in a khaki suit that her favorite antiseptic was "out of date."

She received the blow with fortitude.

At a little distance from the tent several boys were engaged in the preparation of supper and the setting of the long board under the trees. Others were busy with various forms of house-

keeping, or rather camp-keeping, and her domestic instinct prompted her to cast an occasional shrewd look at the systematic and apparently routine work which was going on. What she could not help noticing was the general aspect of orderliness which the camp displayed. Not a paper box nor a tin can was to be seen. She had always associated camping with a sort of rough-and-tumble life and with carelessness in everything pertaining to one's physical welfare. Cleanliness was, to her notion, quite incompatible with life in tents and cooking out of doors.

Her casual discovery of the practice of testing the river water at stated intervals was in the nature of a knock-out blow. She felt a little bewildered as she watched the comings and goings of the troop members. She did not altogether like the realization that the water which had never been tested for her own son's bathing was regularly tested for this "Wild West crew."

"What is that?" she asked.

"That's our bulletin-board. Let me show you about the camp, Mrs. Bennett. You see, you are not our only visitor; we have a delegation from Barrel Alley, as well."

A little way from the roaring fire, whence ema-

nated a most savory odor, the gallant representatives of Bridgeboro's East End were watching the preparations for supper. They had proved faithless to the excursionists and Mr. Ellsworth had invited them to dine at camp, supplementing the invitation with an offer to pay their way home by train, they having come gratuitously on a "freight." Mr. Ellsworth looked far into the future, but just at that moment Mrs. Bennett was his game.

"Here, you see, is one of the patrol tents and over here is the other. We're hoping for still a third. Here's our wireless apparatus. The boys have just discovered that Mr. Berry, the storekeeper over in the village, has an outfit, so they're in high hopes of having a little chat with him. Here, you see, are the drain ditches, so that the camp is free from dampness and stagnant water. We'll be lowering the colors presently. Dorry, my boy, bring the Troop Book over so Mrs. Bennett can see it—and the Troop Album also. Ah, here's Connie now."

From among the group about the fire Connover came guiltily forward. Mrs. Bennett put her arm about him although she said nothing and seemed not altogether pleased. The recollection of his

disobedience was now beginning to supplant her fear and anxiety. A little group of scouts, all on the alert for service, and anxious to advertise the details and features of their camp life, accompanied the trio about.

"What are those?" Mrs. Bennett asked.

"Spears," said Roy.

"Do you throw them at animals?"

"No, indeed," laughed another boy. "We spear papers with them, like this." He speared a fallen leaf to show her.

"Camp is cleared every morning," said Mr. Ellsworth, "and here is our first aid outfit—our special pride," he added as they re-entered his own little tent. "We have better facilities for the care of an injured person than are to be had in the village."

"What were those signs I saw on the trees as I came?"

"Just stalking notes; we study and photograph the wild life."

There was a moment's pause. "It is certainly nice to encourage a feeling of friendship for the forest life," she conceded.

"It is not so much a feeling of friendship as of kinship, Mrs. Bennett."

She turned about and looked sharply at one of the scouts who stood near by. "You are not the Slade boy?" she said.

"Yes—mam."

"I hardly knew you."

Mrs. Bennett's housewifely instincts would not permit her to give any sign of surrender until she had proof of the cooking. But away down in her mother's heart was an uncomfortable feeling which she could not overcome; a feeling of disappointment and dissatisfaction with her own son. She had too much pride to show it, but Connover felt in some vague way that she was not well pleased. She was a mother of high ideals and she was not undiscerning. Aside from her son's disobedience, which had been a shock to her, what an inglorious afternoon had been his! It seemed that every one about her had done something worthy that afternoon except her own son. There lay his victim, the O'Connor boy, bearing his suffering in silence. She noticed that the boys seemed somehow to make allowance for Connover, and it touched her pride.

While the last few touches for this special meal were preparing, she and Mr. Ellsworth wandered a little way out of camp. He spoke kindly, almost

indulgently, she thought, but as one who knew his business and was qualified to speak. He had stormed Mrs. Bennett's fortress too many times to mince matters now.

"I don't know that you're really to blame, Mrs. Bennett—except indirectly."

"I—to blame?"

"I blame *Dan Dreadnought.*"

"I *never* approved of Captain Dauntless' books," she said. "It was a compromise."

"Look up there, Mrs. Bennett—see that nest? Would you believe it, the boys got a photograph of the young birds in that nest and the old bird never knew it."

They walked along, he swinging a stick which he had broken from a tree. "There is no such man as Captain Dauntless, you know. Captains in the army have other work to do than to write stories for boys. Captain Dauntless is a myth."

"It is so hard to know what boys should read," she sighed.

"It is not as hard as it used to be. Remind me to give you a paper before you go. You see, if Connie had been a scout,—well now, let's begin at the beginning. If he had been a scout he wouldn't have read those books in the first place; they're

really not books at all, they're infernal machines. Then if he had been a scout, of course, he wouldn't have disobeyed you; he wouldn't have sneaked off——"

Mrs. Bennett set her lips rather tight at that word, but she did not contest the point.

"If he had been a scout he wouldn't have killed a robin—but if he *had* killed a robin, it would have been by skill and not by a silly, dangerous random shot—and he wouldn't have been afraid of the presence of death or the sight of blood. If he had been a scout he could have determined unerringly the locality of sounds and human voices, and Charlie O'Connor wouldn't——"

Mrs. Bennett winced.

"If he had been a scout he would have known how to swim; there isn't a member of my troop that can't swim. And if he had been a scout he wouldn't have been afraid to go home. Connie has the best home in the world, Mrs. Bennett——"

"I have done everything for Connover——"

"But you see, he was afraid to go to it—and so he came here with us."

The cheerful call of the bugle told that supper was ready. Through the trees they could see the

scouts assembling until each stood at his place at the long board under trees whose foliage had begun to dim in the fading light.

"It's a pretty sight," she said, pausing and raising her lorgnette to her eyes. "What are they all standing for?"

"Till you have taken your seat."

Smilingly she started toward them with all the cultured affability of a true guest. She knew how to do this thing, and she was quite at home now. Mr. Ellsworth knew that her manner covered a sense of humiliation, but she carried it off well and so together they came out of the woods into the clearing.

"I was saying that he came here and—and we want him to stay here. Will you let him join us, Mrs. Bennett?"

"Would he have two blankets over him at night?" she asked after a moment's dismayed pause.

The question was not a surrender; it was a flag of truce, meaning that she would discuss terms.

The surrender came after supper.

CHAPTER XIX

FIRST AID BY WIRELESS

It never rains but it pours, and the conversion of Mrs. Bennett to scouting was shortly followed by the greatest catch of the season.

Charlie O'Connor came into the troop on the same wave which brought Connover, and East End contingent, though it did not surrender as yet, retired to the sweltering and almost deserted Bridgeboro, and tried to kindle a fire in Temple's lot after the Camp Ellsworth fashion. The effort was not very successful.

The next day Jakie Mattenburg, on the strength of talk he had overheard in camp, tried his hand, or rather, his foot, at stalking, and was surprised to find that it was rather more interesting to watch the movements of a sparrow than to throw stones at it.

It could hardly be said that this band of seasoned hoodlums made much immediate progress toward scouting, but they remembered their rescue

from the river at Roy's hands, and they accorded him thereafter a grudging measure of consideration which, in the fullness of time, blossomed into genuine friendship. They were, in fact, the future Elk Patrol in its chrysalis form; but their career as scouts is part of another story.

A few days after the events of the preceding chapter the troop's birthday was celebrated in camp and Connover and Charlie O'Connor submitted themselves to Roy, who tied a pink ribbon about the right arm of each. From Connover's ribbon depended a card reading,

Chief
With Many Happy Returns from
The Silver Foxes

while Charlie O'Connor was presented as the gift of the Ravens.

The presentations were made at supper and the two tenderfeet were led (with rather sheepish faces) to Mr. Ellsworth at the head of the table and tendered to him in true birthday fashion amid much laughter.

Roy made a characteristic speech. "These two valuable gifts are presented to our beloved scout-

master with twelve profit-sharing coupons. When you get one hundred of these coupons take them to Temple's lot in Bridgeboro and receive a new scout.

"Honorable Charles O'Connor has always had brothers enough, but now he has a few hundred thousand more, so he ought to be satisfied. This priceless gift" (grabbing Connover by his pink ribbon) "was very difficult to procure; it is *what you have always wanted.* If it doesn't fit you can exchange it. Honorable Bennover Connett is the only survivor, ladies and gentlemen—the *only survivor* of the extinct Eureka Patrol! The Eureka Patrol was a part of the only original Cock and Bull Troop of Nowhere-in-Particular. The records of this troop, known as the *Dan Dreadnought Series,* are donated to Camp Ellsworth for fuel in case the kindling wood runs short. Full and implicit directions go with each gift."

It was a gala occasion in camp and the troop sat late about the roaring fire that night.

They were just raking up the last embers preparatory to turning in when they were startled by the sound of running footsteps, and out of the darkness emerged a dark-cloaked figure with

streaming hair and glints of white under the heavy garment which she wore.

"I—lost the path," she gasped, "and—and then I saw your—light—and—oh, Mr. Ellsworth—the house—was robbed and James—is shot and —there's another man shot—and it was all planned for they've cut the wires—and we have to get help—a doctor——"

It was Mary Temple who gasped this shocking news and then all but collapsed from fear and haste and excitement. An automobile coat had been donned over her nightdress. For a few moments she was utterly unable to give a coherent account of what had happened at Five Oaks. The few minutes during which she had been lost in the woods, together with the appalling events at home, had quite unnerved her and she clung to Mr. Ellsworth, looking affrightedly about her as if she were being pursued.

He did not wait to get at the details. Something had happened and medical aid was needed. That was apparent.

"Did they send you?" he asked.

"No—I just came—I know scouts can do anything."

"Yes," he said concurrently.

"Of course, we can't get a real doctor, but——"

"We can try," said a voice.

She looked up startled, and in the last dying glow of the fire she saw the stolid face of Tom Slade. It was the first time she had seen him since her mother's mishap and their visit at camp, though she knew from Roy of his tracking feat and recovery of her pin. She knew too of his night in the lock-up, but no knowledge of his father's connection with the affair had come to her.

"I meant—I was coming to thank you—Tom; truly, I was——"

But Tom had turned away and presently she saw an agile figure spring after him.

"Are you going to try for it, Tom?" said Roy. "It's after one o'clock."

"He sometimes stays there till two—he told me—he'll be there."

"How do you know?"

"Because I want him to be."

"Mary thinks you snubbed her, Tom; why didn't you speak to her?"

"I wish I had her ball to toss back," said Tom.

It was odd that he should think of that now.

In the lean-to Roy lit the lantern and presently the whole troop was divided into two groups; one was getting ready the stretcher and helping Doc Carson, and the other stood about the lean-to watching Tom, who sat on the rickety grocery box before the wireless apparatus. Roy stood anxiously at his shoulder; the others waited, speaking to each other in an undertone occasionally, but never to Tom. By common consent they seemed to leave this thing for him to do, and there was about him a certain detachment from the others which suggested slightly his manner that day when he had been arrested.

Boys came and went, Mr. Ellsworth and others departed hastily with Doc, the little group in the lean-to watched and waited while Tom, apparently unconscious of all about him, sat there adjusting his spark gap. Occasionally he spoke in an undertone to Roy, but seemed oblivious of all else.

"R. V., isn't it?" he asked.

"Yes," said Roy.

"Better look and make sure."

Roy consulted a note book. "R. V. is right," said he.

Tom laid his hand upon the key and adjusted

his head receivers. Then up into the darkness and out into the vast trackless sky went the call for R. V.

It was then the boys noticed the cloaked figure of the girl standing in the background watching.

"I thought you went with Doc and Mr. Ellsworth," someone said.

"He said I might stay," she answered timidly.

Tom glanced around and saw her, but showed no interest. Roy sat on the edge of the instrument table, anxiously waiting.

"They can't cut this kind of wires," he said cheerily to Mary as if to make up for Tom's silence.

Eagerly she watched Tom. She seemed fascinated with his absorption and with every slight move of his hand.

"Nothing doing?" said Roy with a note of discouragement.

Tom made no answer, only adjusted the sending instrument to a different wave-length.

"Too late, Tommy boy," Roy said.

Tom paid no attention, only in dogged silence adjusted the sending instrument to another wave-length and readjusted the tuning-coil.

Mary watched him anxiously. She too seemed

AFTER SENDING THE WIRELESS MESSAGE, TOM FINDS HIMSELF A HERO.

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all by herself—a strange, wide-eyed figure, standing apart with the great auto cloak about her, silently watching and not daring to ask a question.

"Who did you say was hurt?" Tom asked at length, without turning.

"A burglar and James—our chauffeur, you know—they were both shot."

"Have you got him?" asked Roy excitedly.

"Nope."

He adjusted the tuning coil again and waited patiently.

"Too late, Tom."

No answer. Then suddenly Tom's hand flew to the sending key, and as the letters of the Morse Code clicked away into the night a slight smile crept over his face. There was no member of the troop who could use the Morse alphabet with such rapidity as Tom, and he often thought (but seldom spoke) of that first message he and Roy had flashed together from the little tower on Blakeley's Hill.

"Up?" asked Roy.

"Sure he's up; wait till I get his O. K."

Back through the night and down to this boy at the rough table and to the tense little group

of watchers came the "O. K." which assured them that the message was understood.

Tom rose and Mary Temple impulsively made a step toward him, then paused half-embarrassed.

She actually stood a little in awe of Tom Slade, of Barrel Alley, who had cheated her and stolen her ball. And Tom Slade, Scout, who was sure of himself and afraid of nothing, was very much in awe of this young girl. And Roy Blakeley, his chum, understood and took the timid, admiring girl into his own charge and so the little party made its way out of the dark woods and across the bridge to Five Oaks.

Mary Temple felt very much as Tom had felt the day after his own first essay at signalling. She knew it was a wireless apparatus he had used (she would have asked questions of him if she had dared), and she supposed that he was calling a doctor. She had experienced a thrill of admiration at the quiet, stolid exhibition of skill, and his apparent aloofness had only deepened her admiration into awe. But as Tom himself had felt so long ago, she wanted to see the tangible result of this work which was such a mystery to her.

Tom hurried stolidly along with Pee-wee and

Charlie O'Connor, with that clumsy gait which he had never entirely overcome, and which, ever so faintly, suggested the old shuffle. Whether there was any foreboding in his mind none of his companions knew for he was never talkative, but in the light of what soon happened, it occurred to them afterward that he had known all along what was before him, that he knew what he should see at Five Oaks, and that, like the good scout, he was *prepared*.

On the way Roy gleaned from Mary more of what had taken place. It appeared that Mr. Temple, hearing sounds in the rooms below, had rung for the gardener who, with the chauffeur, had come from the garage and entered a back door, letting themselves in by means of the chauffeur's key. They were just passing through the foyer when three masked men rushed out of the breakfast room. One got away carrying some loot, not, however, before he had shot and seriously wounded James, the chauffeur, who had dropped in the hall with a bullet in his thigh.

Neither of Mr. Temple's men recalled what became of the second man more than that he disappeared, they thought, empty-handed. The third had made for an open window and was just climb-

ing out when the gardener shot him and he fell to the ground outside, where he still lay when the scouts arrived.

The gardener insisted that the man had drawn a revolver, but no revolver could be found about him.

It was then discovered that the burglary was a well-planned affair, for the telephone wires had been severed, and it was upon discovery of this fact that Mary had hurried to Camp Ellsworth.

Doc Carson was busy with James, who had been lifted to a couch in the hall, when Mary saw the tangible result of Tom's message in the form of two dazzling acetylene headlights coming under the *porte cochère,* and the doctor stepping briskly into the house.

"Oh, Tom," she exclaimed, with as much delight as the occasion would permit, and with gratitude in every note of her voice. "He came, just as you—— Oh, where is he?" she broke off suddenly, as she noticed that Tom was not there.

It was then and not until then that a quick thought flashed upon Roy and he hurried out and around the house.

There, under the bay-window, lay a motionless form. Tom was bending over it and Roy

could hear his quick, short breaths as he tried to control his emotion.

"Is he dead, Tom?" Roy asked softly.

"It's—it's my father."

"Yes, I know. Is he dead?"

"Get the doctor—I'm glad it was me sent the message for him."

It was another culmination of another triumph.

"I'm glad too, Tom."

"They'll have to see him—they'll have to know now. You tell the doctor. I got to be loyal. Tell Mr.—Mr. Ellsworth he's got to remember what he said, that there wasn't no First Bridgeboro Troop when *he* was a boy—you heard him say that."

"He *will* remember it, Tom."

"Get the doctor—quick!"

Tom bent lower over the motionless form of his father as if he were asking a question.

CHAPTER XX

TOM TOSSES IT BACK

WHEN they brought the doctor around they found him still in that position and had to lift him gently away. The announcement that the wound was not fatal did not seem to move his stolidness in the least.

"I want to see Mr. Temple," he said doggedly.

"What is it, Tom?" said Mr. Ellsworth putting his arm over the boy's shoulder.

"I want to see him before he has him arrested—then if the wires are cut I'll send a wireless for the constable—only I want to see Mr. Temple first. I'm not afraid of him now."

"He couldn't be arrested to-night, Tom, he——"

"I want to see Mr. Temple—*you* tell him," he added, turning suddenly upon Mary, almost with an air of command. "I did something for *you*—once."

The girl was sobbing and seemed to hesitate

as if not knowing whether to say something to Tom or to do his bidding. "Yes, I'll get him," she said.

It was not the scout fashion to order a young girl upon an errand, and it was certainly not the scout fashion, nor anyone else's fashion to summon John Temple thus peremptorily. But Tom was a sort of law unto himself and even Mr. Ellsworth did not interfere.

The master of Five Oaks came around the house with his daughter clinging to him. And Tom Slade, who had knocked his hat off, stood up and faced him. It was not always easy to get Tom's meaning; he often used pronouns instead of names and his dogged, stolid temperament showed in his phraseology.

"He told me when I joined the troop that I had to be loyal, and that's the reason I'm doing it and not because I believe in being a burglar." The naïveness of this announcement might have seemed ludicrous if Tom's voice had not trembled with earnestness. "And he said there wasn't no scouts when he was a boy—that's my father there. And that's what *you* got to remember too. I tracked him before and I got the pin and gave him my five dollars that I'd saved.

Someone tittered: John Temple frowned and shook his head impatiently and there was no more tittering.

"I guess you know about that, and that I didn't bring it to her 'cause I was scared, and I couldn't help him coming here to-night. Only you got to remember there wasn't any troop when he was a boy—you *got* to remember that. I'd 'a' been a burglar myself, that's sure, only for him" (indicating Mr. Ellsworth) "and the troop—and Roy. And he's sick—that's most what's the matter with him and I'd like to have him brought to our camp and have Doc take care of him till he gets well enough so's Mr. Ellsworth can talk to him, 'cause Mr. Ellsworth, he never fails—he's never failed once. But if you won't do that—if you won't leave him—let him—go like that—then you got to remember that there wasn't any troop when he was a boy—'cause I'm rememberin' it—and——"

"He *will* remember it," said Mary, weeping. "Oh, he does remember it, Tom, he does."

Mr. Temple drew her to him. "Go on, my boy," he said. "I'm listening."

"If you want me to send a wireless for the constable, I'll do it, 'cause I got to do a service—only you got to remember—that's only fair. And I

got something else to say while I'm not scared of you—'tain't because I got any reason to be scared of you either—but I'm sorry I threw that stone at you. That was what started *him* for the bad —when he went away and left me—but it started me for the good anyhow—so that's something."

For a moment no one spoke. Mr. Ellsworth would not spoil the effect of Tom's words by uttering so much as a single word himself. It was John Temple who broke the silence, quieting his daughter who seemed about to break forth again.

"I will do more than remember," said he. "Come here, my boy. There will be no charge made against your father, so there will be no need of a service unless it is a service of my own. It has been borne in upon me lately that your good scoutmaster is a wonder-worker, and what you have just said strengthens that growing conviction. I have been thinking, too, how I might further the movement so well represented by him, and the story of your experience with your father has quite decided me. For every one of those five precious dollars that you were sensible enough to save and noble enough to give away, there shall be given a thousand to the cause whose precepts and principles you represent.

"Let this poor man be taken to your camp in the woods if you like, and let your doctor take care of him, and see that he does his duty. I will visit your camp myself to-morrow if I may."

Mr. Ellsworth assured him that he might, and as for Doc, a half dozen chimed forth that he was the only ever, etc., etc.

Tom said nothing. He had never been much of a scout missionary, and the unexpected and altogether amazing conversion of John Temple quite overwhelmed him. He did not realize that he himself had done it, in his own stolid, crude way.

But would his hope be borne out? Would the Wizard Ellsworth indeed "get away with it," and make a new man of poor, wretched Bill Slade? I should hesitate to affirm it; but I wouldn't dare to deny it—not before the boys. So let us rest in the hope born of Tom's own words that Mr. Ellsworth had never yet failed. Let us believe that the woods and the camp-fire yarns and the company of these boys may be a helping hand to the broken wretch who had no First Bridgeboro Troop to look to when he was a boy.

As they bore the stretcher over the bridge toward the woods beyond, Tom heard the sound

of footfalls a little distance behind them, and paused.

It proved to be Mary Temple.

"Tom, is that you?" she said.

"Yes—it is."

"I want to thank you, Tom. I was coming to your camp to-morrow, but I couldn't wait. I want to thank you, Tom."

"What for?"

"Oh, for everything. You don't realize the things you do and that's the best part of it."

"I didn't do noth—anything."

"You got me back my pin. Oh, Tom, you don't suppose five thousand dollars is *all* my father will give—he'll give ten times that!"

Tom said nothing, and for a moment they stood there near the bridge, hearing the river rippling below.

Then, impulsively, she leaned forward and kissed him. "There," she said, "that's how much I thank you! And I'm coming to your camp again. I'm coming with my father," she said, as she turned and ran toward home.

Still Tom said nothing. He could not handle a situation like this at all.

A little way down the road she turned and

waved her hand, and he realized that if he were going to make any acknowledgment it would have to be done now. So he mastered his embarrassment as best he could, raised his hand awkwardly to his lips and threw a kiss to Mary Temple!

He had scarcely turned and started after the little cavalcade when he stumbled into Roy.

"I was just coming to see where you were. Well, you took it, didn't you?" Roy added, as they walked along together.

"Took what?"

"Something for a service."

"I—I couldn't help myself," said Tom.

For answer Roy gave him a shove and laughed outright. "So your Uncle Dudley was right and you broke the scout law after all—ya-a-ah-a!"

They walked a little way in silence.

"Well, anyway," Roy said, "you can say you tossed it back, can't you?"

"'Twasn't her ball."

"It was much better than a ball."

"How do you know what I took and what I tossed back?"

"A scout is observant," said Roy.

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